

news

Tories in trouble: Nicholson's defection leaves Government increasingly vulnerable to vote of no confidence

Labour looking to force early election

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

The first big test for the Government following the defection of Emma Nicholson to the Liberal Democrats could come early in the new year with a re-run of the issue on which it was defeated just before Christmas – the opening of British fishing waters to European fleets.

The defeat, although embarrassing and morale-jolting, was confined to a technical matter, but ministers fear that Labour may now put down a motion of no confidence in the Government's conduct of its fisheries policies to force a full

no-confidence vote with the intention of forcing an early election.

Such a move would attract the support of the Ulster Unionists, a prominent Ulster Unionist MP confirmed last night. The Liberal Democrats including Ms Nicholson would be expected to vote with Labour.

The Government defeat, brought about by a Tory rebellion, and Ulster Unionist opposition, underlined the vulnerability of its majority. After Ms Nicholson's defection, Mr Major is faced with the prospect of a by-election defeat in Staffordshire South East, the seat held by the late Sir David

Lightbown, reducing the Government's majority to three.

Another by-election defeat, or another defection, would all but wipe out Mr Major's majority. He would then have to depend on alliances with the minor parties, led by the Official Ulster Unionists. Unlike the Callaghan government of the late 1970s, he has nothing to offer the Scottish and Welsh nationalists to secure their support in a no-confidence vote.

Mr Major's leadership will be put on the line in May, when the Tories expect to suffer more disastrous losses in the local elections. If the party's morale cracks, Labour will be on the

lookout for any opportunity to bring the Government down with a no-confidence vote.

Senior government sources said last night that Mr Major expected to lose his working majority in the Commons before the end of 1996, but was still planning to struggle through to a general election in May 1997.

As Ms Nicholson's defection showed, Mr Major is playing a careful balancing act between the One-Nation Tories, and the Euro-sceptics, who could force a general election, although it would be almost certain political suicide for many of them. Labour's plan is to inflict as much damage as possible,

in the hope that it will wear down the Government.

Labour sources confirmed that the party leadership was also preparing for a full-scale vote against rail privatisation early in the new year. A number of One-Nation Tory MPs warned before Christmas that they may vote against the Government on the issue.

However, the *Independent* has learnt that the threat of a rebellion has receded following the court ruling that the director of franchising for the new privatised services will have to protect the existing timetable.

The potential rebels, led by Sir Keith Speed, a former min-

ister, were satisfied with assurances they were given in a private meeting by Sir George Young, the Transport Secretary, that more rolling stock could be provided as a result of privatisation. Others who were uneasy about privatisation included Tim Rathbone, Stephen Day and Nicholas Winterdon.

The Liberal Democrats will vote with Labour against rail privatisation but Mr Major can count on Ulster Unionist support, because it does not directly affect Northern Ireland.

Senior Labour sources said there were parallels between Mr Major's difficulties and the last days of the Callaghan adminis-

tration before it was brought down by a single Irish nationalist abstention on a no-confidence vote in 1979.

Despite the Government's troubles, Labour is wary of predicting an early election. "We will take every opportunity we can," a leadership source said. "There was a whiff of defeat about the Callaghan government. It was a question of when, not if, it would be defeated. I think John Major is a very dogged man. We don't expect them to go on until 1997, but that is what he is determined to do. He needs to do that, to get another Budget, but his problem is that he is no longer in control."

Unionists offer lifeline to Major

COLIN BROWN

The Ulster Unionists yesterday offered to throw John Major a lifeline to enable his Government to survive until 1997, but at the price of holding firm in its demands for the IRA to begin disarmament before Sinn Féin can join all-party talks.

The increasing influence of the 12 Ulster Unionists in the Commons arithmetic will alarm the Irish government. Assurances that they will not be able to exact a change of policy will be sought before the two Prime Ministers meet again, possibly in late January.

But a leading Tory backbench MP, Peter Temple-Morris, warned Mr Major he could not trust the Ulster Unionists to back him.

Mr Temple-Morris, co-chairman of the British-Irish Parliamentary body, said: "Having observed them pretty closely during 1976 to 1979, you couldn't trust them then, and you cannot trust them now. They are not what I would call a fully national party. They see everything in terms of their own region. I think Ireland transcends party politics. We have an historic opportunity now which is of greater importance than the next general election."

He added: "I hope that the Mitchell commission will come up with very strong recommendations aimed at the IRA on the one hand and the British government on the other. Providing they come up with reasonable recommendations for the IRA to begin decommissioning, we should use that as an excuse to get off the hook of preliminary decommissioning."

The nine Ulster Unionists and the three DUP MPs, led by Ian Paisley, have a pivotal role

in Parliament, following the defection of Emma Nicholson to the Liberal Democrats.

The pressure from Dublin and Irish Nationalists on Mr Major to give way is expected to increase after the report, due in two weeks, by the Mitchell Commission on dealing with the IRA weapons. There are doubts that it will be able to find a way through the impasse.

The Ulster Unionists, led by David Trimble, are willing to support the Government as long as Mr Major sticks to the existing policy of insisting on a start being made to decommissioning before Sinn Féin can take a seat at the negotiating table.

"We are going to try to support the Government in the foreseeable future," said Ken Maginnis, the Ulster Unionist spokesman on security.

"The only thing we are talking about here are votes of confidence. If there was a vote of no confidence tomorrow we would have to ask ourselves: Is it worth bringing them down? The answer is no," said Mr Maginnis.

The three Democratic Unionist MPs will put pressure on Mr Major to embrace the plan for a directly elected assembly for Ulster to appoint negotiating teams for all-party talks, although the idea has been dismissed by the nationalist SDLP leader John Hume, and has failed to convince John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister.

The rise in killings of alleged drug dealers in Belfast has raised fears that the IRA could be inching back towards violence, thus threatening the peace process. Those fears are likely to be increased if no way round the impasse is found, and Sinn Féin remain barred from all-party talks.

Six Tory MPs most likely to be targeted by Labour or the Liberal Democrats



Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster), 57. Leading Tory, chairman of the One Nation Maceled group of Tory MPs, to which Emma Nicholson belonged. He is openly critical of the Government for not moving further in the Northern Ireland peace process, but will stay and fight. "I have no intention whatsoever of going over. I have a very lifelong loyalty to my constituency. I cannot face kicking them in the teeth."



Hugh Dykes (Harrow East), 56. Europhile and leading member of the European movement, even wears a tie and watch with flag of Europe, but oddly voted with Euro-sceptics against Government in defeat on fish quotas. On most people's list as MP most likely to defect over Europe, but said yesterday he would not do so. "I am a lifelong Conservative and intend to stay and fight for what I believe are the right policies."



Tim Rathbone (Lewes), 62. A leading member of the One Nation Maceled group. A caring Tory who dared to raise unpopular causes, such as electoral reform, reform of the drugs laws, and shared Emma Nicholson's concern about post-Gulf war Iraq. Pro-European, and Liberal in past generations of the family, but said yesterday he would not defect. Will fight next election to defend One Nation principles in the Tory party.



Sir Keith Speed (Ashford), 61. One Nation Tory, former minister, member of the Maceled group, claimed he was approached in 1981-82 to join the Liberals after he was sacked as a Navy minister by Thatcher, but told them he would stay to fight his corner. "I remember Iain Maceled saying to me, 'You never go to another party...' He said he had not changed that view."



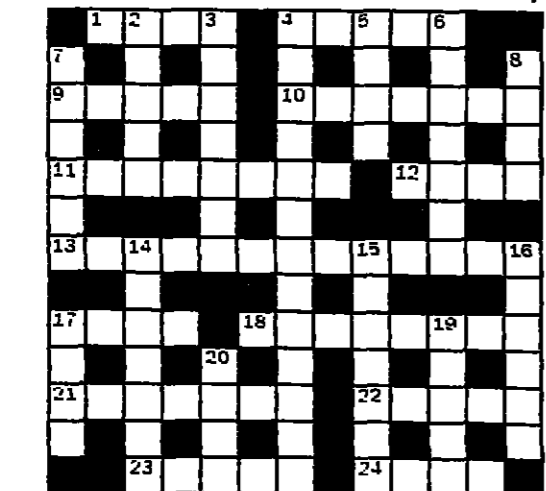
Robert Hicks (Cornwall South East), 57. Dipping wet, former whip in Heath Government, never given a job by Thatcher, prime recruitment material by the opposition parties, but has announced he will be standing down at the next election, rather than following Emma Nicholson, in spite of sharing some of her views about the right-wing drift of the party.



George Walden (Buckingham), 59. Brainy maverick, seen as a wild card – announced his retirement from the Commons because of his general dissatisfaction with Parliament. Shows no sign of defecting but the Tory whips will be watching closely.

concise crossword

No. 2871 Monday 1 January By Paula

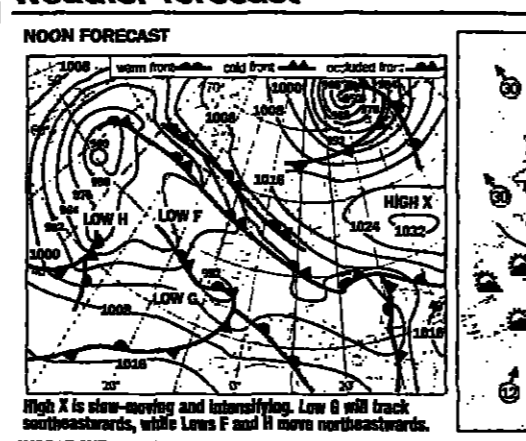


- ACROSS**
- Computer storage facility (4)
 - Cache (5)
 - Yorkshire city (5)
 - Connection (7)
 - Wellington Victory (8)
 - Axe handle (4)
 - Plane four-sided figure (13)
 - Wild party (4)
 - Remarkable type (8)
 - Stroke of luck (7)
 - Overturn (5)
 - Tidal bore (5)
 - Orient (4)
- DOWN**
- Unskilful (5)
 - Small falcon (7)
 - Remain silent (4,4,5)
 - Slightly open (4)
 - Loss hope (7)
 - Inflate (4,2)
 - Bloodsucker (4)
 - Income (7)
 - Stop up (7)
 - Tiny (6)
 - Gem (4)
 - Jewish patriarch (5)
 - Catch (4)

Solution to Saturday's Concise Crossword:
Across: 1. Winch, 4. Ether (Winchester), 9. Slime, 11. Echo, 12. Imitate, 13. Sin, 14. Omit, 16. Seek, 18. Due, 20. Resolve, 21. Ease, 24. Twist, 25. Victory, 26. School, 27. Siege, Down: 1. Wasted, 2. Neath, 3. Suspense, 6. Heroin, 7. Recked, 8. Begun, 13 and 15. Silky, 16. Heel, 17. Messiah, 17. Grates, 18. Deba, 19. Re-type, 22. Above, 23. Ice.

Notes

Weather forecast



High X is slow-moving and intensifying. Low Y will track southwards, with Lanes F and G from northwards.

WORLD WEATHER	TEMPERATURE	WIND	PRECIPITATION
London	10-15	SW 10-15	Light rain
Birmingham	10-15	SW 10-15	Light rain
Manchester	10-15	SW 10-15	Light rain
Newcastle	10-15	SW 10-15	Light rain
Glasgow	10-15	SW 10-15	Light rain
Belfast	10-15	SW 10-15	Light rain
Edinburgh	10-15	SW 10-15	Light rain
Cardiff	10-15	SW 10-15	Light rain
Bristol	10-15	SW 10-15	Light rain
Exeter	10-15	SW 10-15	Light rain
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Manchester	10-15	SW 10-15	Light rain
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Labour threatens to expel Scargill

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

Arthur Scargill and other left-wingers have been warned they will be expelled from Labour if they press ahead with their plans for a new socialist party.

The threat came after union activists met in secret in December to plan the constitution of the new organisation, which was first suggested by Mr Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Officials at Watworth Road said that anyone joining would face automatic expulsion. "If they plan to fight Labour in any form of elections, or if they form a party within a party, they will be in breach of our rules and will have their membership suspended," the spokesman said.

Invitations to the meeting were issued by Pat Sissons, a representative of London Underground workers on the national executive of the RMT transport union. A spokesman for the union said yesterday that all those attending did so in a personal capacity and without the authority of the RMT. The union could not dictate to which party its members or officers belonged.

Officials from other unions such as the public service union, Unison; Usdaw, the shopworkers' union; the National Union of Teachers and the Transport & General were also present. Some of them, however, have expressed doubts about the viability of the new grouping.

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Country House Hotel overlooking Hyde Park RAC Blue Ribbon A THISTLE COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL

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Antarctic challenge: Frostbite cripples explorer two weeks after rival Briton halted solo walk



End of the line: Borge Ousland, the Norwegian explorer who decided to halt his solo attempt to cross the Antarctic after suffering frostbite

Photograph: Kjell Ove Storik

Norwegian abandons polar trek

STEPHEN GOODWIN

Borge Ousland, the Norwegian attempting to walk alone across the Antarctic – the last great challenge in polar exploration – has given up his attempt because of frostbite, two weeks after his British rival also conceded defeat.

Within hours of learning that Ousland had been airlifted out, Roger Mear announced that he would return to Antarctica next autumn for another attempt at the 1,657-mile crossing.

Using skis and pulling a sledge with 450lb of supplies, the 45-year-old mountain guide from Derbyshire covered 424 miles in 42 days before deciding he was going too slowly. He blamed difficult snow conditions and tracking problems with his sledge, but remained convinced a solo, unsupported crossing was possible.

Despite the strong echoes of the Amundsen-Scott race to the South Pole, both explorers expressed sympathy at the misfortunes of their rival.

Mear said he hoped Ousland's frostbite injuries were not serious. "His failure to complete the crossing, even after being resupplied at the South Pole, puts into perspective the magnitude of the journey and the

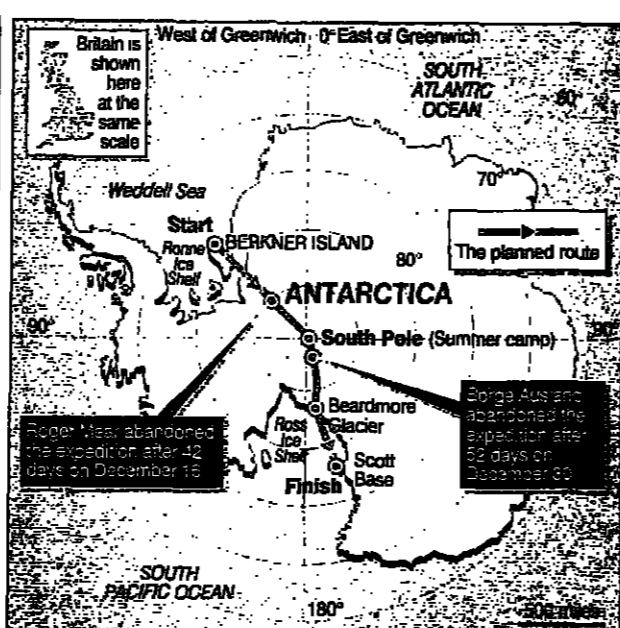


Final challenge: Rivals Borge Ousland, left, and Roger Mear

difficulties facing anyone who attempts it."

The caveat was significant. Mear pulled all his supplies for an unsupported crossing he hoped to complete in 100 days.

Ousland was focusing on the solo aspect. Relying on resupply, he was able to start out with a load some 85lb lighter than Mear's.



Final challenge: Rivals Borge Ousland, left, and Roger Mear and the routes they planned to conquer the Antarctic

The Norwegian was airlifted to safety four days after leaving the South Pole on the second leg of his crossing. Frostbite on the inside of his thighs had become so inflamed he realised it would be folly to continue.

Behind the cruel necessity to pull out was an almost amateur miscalculation by the most experienced of solo polar trav-

ellers. "In retrospect he should have used one extra pair of underpants for that particular day," said the expedition spokesman Hans Christian Erlandsen.

Ousland was resting yesterday in Punta Arenas in southern Chile. He was "disappointed" but had the consolation of becoming the first person to ski to



both the North and South Poles alone and unsupported by pre-placed supplies or air drops.

The 33-year-old former deep sea diver took only 44 days to reach the South Pole from Berkner Island by the Weddell Sea. Temperatures fell to as low as -40C.

Adjusting clothing when the sun can give a warming im-

pression and whilst expending energy pulling a 450lb loaded sledge is a tricky business. On one day Ousland got it wrong and the biting cold sowed his downfall. "He should have had more on that day. It's easy to say so afterwards," Mr Erlandsen told the Independent.

Ousland left the United States base at the South Pole on Christmas Day and covered another 40 miles before calling for help.

"Because of the walking the frostbite had no opportunity to heal. It was rubbing all the time. After the pole the inflammation became even worse on one side and it dug in deeper. Borge understood it had no chance of healing by itself."

Ousland was seen by a doctor at the US base who confirmed the correctness of the decision to pull out of the expedition.

As to whether he will try again, Mr Erlandsen has so far been too delicate to press his friend. But the news that Roger Mear was to try again was greeted as "very interesting".

The history of polar exploration strongly suggests that in less than 12 months both men will be pitting themselves against the same unforgiving wilderness.

Joint investigation: Detectives reconsider possibility of a link between murders

Student may have been victim of Midlands Ripper

WILL BENNETT

In November, senior officers from four police forces met to discuss whether a serial killer, who has already been dubbed the "Midland Ripper", is operating in parts of the Midlands and northern England.

It was not the first such meeting, another took place in August 1994, because although many detectives are sceptical about the serial killer theory they are also haunted by the possibility that they might have another "Yorkshire Ripper" on their hands.

After their last meeting, which discussed five murders of young women in the Midlands and the North, detectives admitted that there were similarities between the killings, but dismissed the possibility that one man was responsible.

Yesterday, the possibility that they might have been wrong surfaced once again with the sug-



Samo Paull: strangled and her half-naked body dumped

gestion that Celine Figard, 19, the French student whose body was found near Worcester on Friday, may have been murdered by a serial killer.

Chief Superintendent John McCammon, of West Mercia Police, said police were linking her killing with the murder of Tracy Turner, one of the five dis-

cussed at the meetings. "In November this year, police chiefs from Leicestershire, West Midlands, Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire discussed the possibility that the serial killer was responsible for five deaths around the country," he said.

Miss Turner, 32, from Stafford, was last seen alive at a service station on the M6 in Staffordshire in March 1994. She was a prostitute who plied her trade from motorway service stations in the Midlands. Her naked body was found in a ditch near Bitteswell in Leicestershire, just four miles from Swinford, where Samo Paull was found dead three months earlier.

Miss Paull, 20, from Rowley Regis, West Midlands, was also a prostitute and worked in the red light area of Balsall Heath in Birmingham. She had been strangled and her body was half naked and like the other victims there was no evidence

of a sexual assault. The third victim discussed by detectives at the meetings was Dawn Shields, 19, a prostitute whose body was found in a shallow grave covered by stones at Mazon Tor in the Peak District in Derbyshire in May 1994. She too had been strangled.

In August 1994, the naked body of Julie Finley, 23, was found dumped in a field by a lovers' lane near Skelmersdale, Lancashire. Like the other victims, Miss Finley, a suspected drug addict who is thought to have mixed with prostitutes, had been strangled.

Police also discussed the murder of Julie Clayton, an Australian hitch-hiker, but her killer, Dennis Walker, was sentenced to life imprisonment a month ago. They are keeping an open mind about the murder of Sharon Harper, 21, a barmaid, from Grantham, Lincolnshire, whose body was discovered on a building site on 3 July 1994.

Universities in boycott threat over funding

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

Universities may boycott government inspections of their teaching in protest at spending cuts of more than £100m announced in the Budget. At a meeting next month, vice-chancellors will argue that they should no longer co-operate with the quality assessments because they can no longer guarantee the quality of their cash-starved courses.

Other radical options which may be proposed in the aftermath of the cuts could include charging top-up fees and targeting a handful of friendly Tory MPs who might be persuaded to rebel on behalf of the universities. Some universities may be forced to cut numbers, or to recruit more foreign students, who pay higher fees.

The vice-chancellors will meet to discuss a range of proposals amid growing frustration and anger over university funding. Earlier last month they refused to hear a speech by Eric Forth, the education minister, which was due to have been read to them by a senior civil servant. Instead they issued a statement saying that the cuts were "catastrophic" and that they would have to cut student numbers to cope.

The Government says universities can make up for cuts of £51m in their building and refurbishment programmes in the next three years by striking up partnerships with the private

sector, but universities say this is unlikely to happen. Cuts of a further £50m are being made in their day-to-day spending.

Vice-chancellors have called for a scheme under which students would repay part of their fees, and this will also be discussed at their next meeting. But neither of the main political parties is likely to commit itself to such a proposal before the next general election.

The executive of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) will meet this month to draw up a range of options to be discussed when more than 100 university heads meet next month. These are likely to include a boycott of the Teaching Quality Assessments, which are carried out by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

One vice-chancellor, who did not want to be named, said a number of his colleagues would support this option. "There are certainly some vice-chancellors who now believe it will not be possible to maintain quality in this funding regime, and so one option likely to be discussed is the extent to which full participation in quality assessment should be maintained," he said.

A HEFCE spokesman said it was working closely with the vice-chancellors to develop quality assurance arrangements. "In the light of the progress being made it would be extremely surprising if the CVCP wished to take any action which would harm this process."

Foreign students hitch despite risks

WILL BENNETT

The death of Celine Figard has served as a brutal warning of the dangers of hitch-hiking, particularly for young women travelling alone.

The publicity given to such dangers has led to a huge reduction in the number of hitch-hikers in Britain since the Seventies when they were a com-

mon sight on every major road. Increased car ownership has also contributed to the decline, with many more young people either owning cars or coming from families with more than one vehicle which they can borrow for long journeys.

Many of those still hitching in Britain are foreign students, like Celine. The day after the discovery of Celine Figard's naked

body, Same Ebbel, 19, and Petra Sprey, 20, from the Netherlands, seemed oblivious of the risks. They were hitching near Bath, Somerset, trying to get a lift to Ilfracombe, Devon. They said they did not have enough money to travel by train.

Ms Ebbel said: "I did hear about the French girl, but I am not frightened. I probably would not hitch on my own."

Ms Sprey added: "It does worry me a bit, but you have to think in a positive way. There are two of us and not everybody is bad, but I think it is really sad what happened to the French girl. People have been very nice and helpful. They always take us where we want to go and I have not been frightened. It is more exciting to hitch-hike. You get to meet new people."

Q

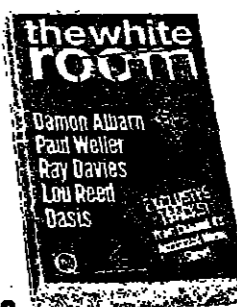
"I'm there.
I'm with
The Beatles."



Oh brother! In this month's Q, Oasis leader Noel Gallagher on fame, family, finance, fate, fraternal fisticuffs and far more besides.

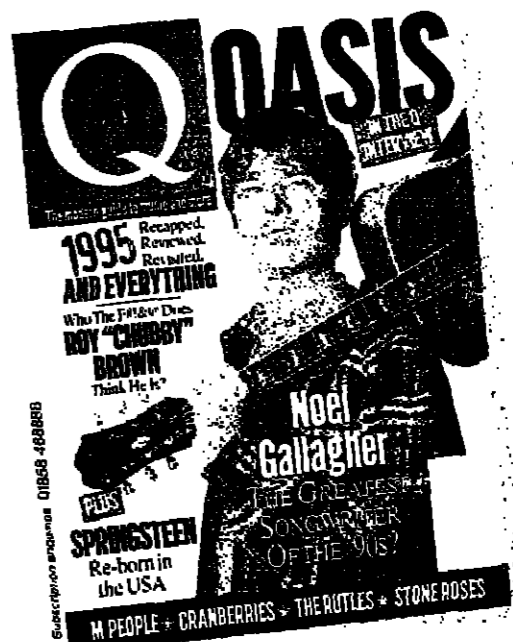
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WE'RE GONNA LIVE FOREVER.

Spotlight falls on forgotten 'Nativity'

IAN MacKINNON

After 13 years lying virtually unseen in a studio, a priceless stained-glass window by the late John Piper has found a new home in timely fashion.

The *Nativity*, designed by Piper in 1982 for an exhibition, "Prophecy and Vision", has been installed in one of Britain's foremost small Norman churches, St Mary the Virgin, at Ilfley, Oxfordshire, already home to carvings dating from 1170 when it was built. It is now home to the more recent attraction.

Myfanwy Piper, widow of the artist who was one of the country's most revered stained-glass artists, donated the window to the church because of her husband's love of the area. He had famously illustrated the *Shell* guidebooks, written by his close friend the former Poet Laureate John Betjeman, as they toured Britain.

The *Nativity* depicts a fourth-century Latin hymn telling the story of the birth of Christ as relayed by a cockerel, a goose, a crow, an owl and a lamb.

Piper's widow and family joined the congregation at St Mary's to view the latest addition. The vicar, the Rev Peter Judd, said: "Ilfley church is world famous for its carvings dating from the time it was built. Now we have something of unique importance from our own generation."



Window-dressing: The Rev Peter Judd, vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Ilfley, in the shadow of *The Nativity*, a stained-glass window by John Piper, donated by the artist's widow, Myfanwy. Photograph: John Lawrence

Bishop calls for curbs on 'obscene' lottery jackpots

REBECCA FOWLER

The biggest National Lottery jackpot so far - £33m - has been branded "obscene" by a senior Anglican bishop, who says the Government should put a limit on prize money.

Ticket sales are expected to soar this week in anticipation of the record prize. Already 30 million people play the lottery each week, and even in a normal rollover week, where the jackpot is carried over because there is no winner, sales go up by 20 per cent.

But the Bishop of Wakefield, the Right Rev Nigel McCulloch, said: "This is far too much. Anyone with any common sense knows that to win £33m in one go can have terrible effects. It can totally destroy lives and bring misery."

If an individual wins this week's jackpot - £11m higher than the last record jackpot of £22.8m, which was shared by two lottery players - he or she will automatically assume the same fortune as Nigel Mansell the motor-racing driver, who risked his life to rise to the top of his sport.

The church, which has been one of the most outspoken critics

of the lottery since it was set up more than a year ago, has accused the lottery of creating a nation of gamblers, who pin all their hopes on the chance of a big win, even though the odds of taking a top prize are 1 in 14 million. "Sadly most of the concerns expressed by the House of Bishops when the lottery first started have been realised," said the Rev Eric Shegog, a spokesman for Church House.

The incomes of charities have diminished, those who can least afford it are spending beyond their means, and it is creating a something-for-nothing culture. For a number of individuals who have won huge prizes, it's created an enormous lot of problems."

The average weekly spend on lottery tickets is £2.15, according to Camelot, compared to £2 on scratchcards, in the hope of winning the jackpot. It is most popular among C2s - skilled manual workers who make up 24 per cent of the population, but buy 31 per cent of tickets.

The Bishop of Wakefield has called for an all-party commission to investigate the effects of the lottery. According to Gamblers' Anonymous, it has received 17.5 per cent more calls

for assistance since the lottery was set up. Some addicts are spending up to £150 a week on tickets and scratchcards.

But the Department of National Heritage, which is responsible for the lottery, and Camelot both defended the prizes this weekend. They say the rollovers maximise ticket sales, which ultimately benefits the good causes which receive grants from the lottery.

A Camelot spokeswoman said: "As a result of rollovers ticket sales go up significantly, raising important additional funds for the good causes."

"Last week sales increased by around £10m, raising an extra approximate £2.5m for the good causes."

The Government has resisted calls to cap prizes, because it says evidence from lotteries in other countries show that sales drop notably if the jackpots diminish. "The lottery is a great success and we are not going to apologise for that," a heritage department spokesman said. "It is very unlikely this double rollover will be won by a single person, because the large jackpots are usually shared, although we would not have a problem if it was."

In the third of a weekly series, Nicholas Schoon reports on plans for reviving the fortunes of the reclusive bittern RSPB takes lead in drive to preserve bird's habitat

The bittern is one of the rarest British birds, with a breeding population totalling less than 50. A handsome, reclusive relative of the slightly larger and more common grey heron, it lives in reed marshes in Norfolk, Suffolk and Lancashire preying on fish, especially eels, frogs and occasionally on small mammals and birds.

The golden-brown bitterns are hardly ever seen because they stay among the tall, dense reeds and are well camouflaged. The only way to estimate their breeding population is to listen for the strange, booming calls of the males trying to attract a mate from January to May. It is thought to be the deepest sound produced by any bird, a brief, fog-horn like tone which can be heard up to a mile away.

Last summer, 20 booming males were heard in Britain, up on the 16 detected in 1994. But 40 years ago there were more than four times as many and they had a much wider range.

The bittern is endangered in Britain and across Europe mainly due to destruction of its habitat. Large areas of reedbed have been drained and gone un-



der the plough this century. The bird is one of the 116 declining or endangered British animal and plant species or one of the 14 types of dwindling habitat covered by new rescue plans drawn up by a steering group of government scientists and wildlife conservation groups. The Government has promised to respond in the spring.

Poisoning by pesticides, harsh winters, sewage pollution lowering fish populations and dis-



The bittern tends to live among tall, dense reeds

turbance by pleasure boating are also likely factors in the bittern's decline. What remains of their habitat in Britain has to be managed to preserve it. Trees and shrubs invade neglected reedbeds and they turn into boggy forests. So the reeds have to be cut back and allowed to regrow, and the water table kept high to bring in the bitterns.

Those that breed here already depend on nature reserves run by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and other organisations for their habitat.

The steering group proposes that by 2000 the population should be growing and expanding its range, reaching at least 100 booming males over the next quarter-century. This can be done by preserving the 22 remaining large reedbeds where bittern once occurred and creating 1,200 hectares of new habitat - about four and a half square miles.

The RSPB has made a start, purchasing a carrot field in Lakenheath, Suffolk, which will be turned into marshy reedbed. The steering group estimates the cost of the bittern recovery programme at £10,000 a year.

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international

Sarajevo Serbs pack for final exodus

Rumours and blind panic trigger mass flight from city's contested suburbs, writes Emma Daly

Vogosca, near Sarajevo — The couple, friendly and fluent, chatted easily, if a little anxiously, about the future — until they posed for pictures before mounds of bags and boxes stacked in the hall.

Moments later, Jovanka Dzoric and her husband, Dobrovoje, were weeping inconsolably, their fear of life under enemy rule blotting out the familiar rigours of war. As Sarajevans prepared to celebrate their first peaceful New Year for four years — in the presence of Bono, lead singer of U2 and self-described "first tourist" to post-war Bosnia, all is gloom and confusion across the line as the Orthodox Christmas approaches.

The Dzorics, who will have little to celebrate, moved at the start of the Bosnian war in April 1992 from central Sarajevo to the distant suburb of Vogosca, a dreary modern town known only for its Volkswagen Golf factory. The rebel Serb army soon took control of the suburb, and the Dzorics have spent the past four years in the relative comfort of an absent Muslim family's flat, protected from the worst of the shelling.

They are an average family: she, a typist, spent the war keeping house, her husband, a former waiter at the Hotel Europa in Sarajevo, was sent to the front, along with most Serb men aged 18 to 60. Both are used to taking orders, and neither has had the power to affect the course of the conflict. But they have packed every last possession (save the coffee set and a few clothes) in preparation for what they see as an inevitable exodus. "When we fled Sarajevo we were too late to take all our things — this time we want to be ready," Mrs Dzoric said with a laugh.

By 3 February, the Bosnian Serb army will have withdrawn from Vogosca and four other suburbs; on 21 March, the Bosnian government will assume control. Most residents, like the Dzorics, are waiting to



Moving on: Serbs from the Sarajevo suburb of Ilidza, due to be handed over to Muslims, take a last look at home before leaving by bus for Pale

Photograph: Ruth Fremson

see, but making ready to leave, just in case. They are living in an anxious limbo, taunted by their leadership's insistence on a new "solution" for Sarajevo, and a rewriting of the Dayton peace plan to divide the city.

"We were helping my sister to pack yesterday," Mrs Dzoric said. "She left last night for Zvornik [a town on the Serbian border]. She has left with her furniture and she will not be back." Trucks are parked on the street outside, waiting for new customers; it cost Mrs Dzoric's sister 1,000 Deutschmarks to move. The hall is crammed with bags, boxes and rolled carpets, but the couple cannot afford the transport to a cellar in Bratunac, a Serb-held town in eastern Bosnia, where they plan to store their possessions.

They have nowhere to go — save their flat in Sarajevo, now home to Muslim refugees, they think — but go they shall.

"How can we stay? I'm afraid of their government taking over," Mrs Dzoric said. "I could have stayed in Sarajevo in 1992 but I had very terrible experiences... we lived in a building with Muslim families and we would greet one another with 'Good day' or 'Good afternoon'. But from the moment of the declaration of independence, they began to say 'Salamu aleikum' [Peace be with you]. Mrs Dzoric says she was threatened for not using the Arabic greeting.

Such incidents, while uncomfortable, do not merit a niche in the catalogue of Bosnia's war horrors. Yet Mr

and Mrs Dzoric are convinced that it is but a short step from "hello" to a final goodbye. They assured us that President Alija Izetbegovic had promised to jail every Serb soldier for six years — a report that had escaped the notice of the international press. They had not heard him themselves, but friends had seen him on television... Thus the flow of information works in the Bosnian Serb statelet, the Republika Srpska. Propaganda is so pervasive that wild rumours are received like gospel and stories are woven to fit the politically correct view.

"I know what happened to my relatives in Sarajevo," Mrs Dzoric said firmly. "My sister-in-law was killed. We were only told that she was killed in her house. Most probably it was a

sniper." It emerged that she had been killed in August 1995, and that she lived in Hrasno, a district where all live in mortal danger — from Serb snipers across the front line 50 yards away. The likelihood is that Mrs Dzoric's relative was killed by Serb fire, yet her death is taken as proof of the Bosnian government's evil intent.

Neither Mrs Dzoric nor her husband seem to be extreme nationalists; they are "Yugo-nostalgic". Mr Dzoric carries in the pocket of his camouflage jacket a well-kept black-and-white photo of himself as a stiff young waiter standing by Marshal Tito. Their fear stems from rumour, conjecture and perhaps the well-guarded sense of guilt that touches many Serbs in Bosnia, regardless of their own

role in the war. And they live in confusion, contradicting themselves in one breath.

"We will move all our things and perhaps later move the family," Mrs Dzoric said. So the family might stay? "No, not a chance. No way. Without our government we cannot stay."

Could Nato's peace Implementation Force (I-For), or the international police force due to patrol the area, guarantee their safety in any way?

"Even under I-For protection we would be afraid, because there would be no [Serb] soldiers on the front line to keep watch," she explained. "Although we believe in I-For, danger still exists."

Yet their main anxiety about staying put in Vogosca centres on the potential loss of their

apartment: "I'm afraid the owner will come back and claim it — perhaps if it was a Serbian flat I would stay," Mrs Dzoric said. "What do you think — would we be safe here?" her husband asked.

Well, we replied, neither of you has done anything wrong and, for at least a year, the area will be patrolled by I-For, the foreign police, human rights observers. Perhaps it depends on the choices you face. If you have a house in Banja Luka, move there. If you will lose everything, stay here.

"That's true," he said. "We should be refugees again." He paused. "But we are not sure..."

A cry from the heart that echoes through the Serb-held suburbs of Sarajevo.

CHILDREN OF WAR APPEAL

Help build the peace

The Independent is asking readers to support four charities working to help child victims of the wars in former Yugoslavia. More than £100,000 has been donated so far.

Save the Children is working with children who have been separated from their families, counselling and reuniting them. The Red Cross is running the largest humanitarian operation in the region, looking after refugee camps and linking people through its famous messaging network.

War Child plans to build a music therapy centre in Mostar, and to send prosthetics to wounded children in the Tuzla area.

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THANK YOU

Yeltsin rings in New Year on note of reform

HELEN WOMACK
Moscow

President Boris Yeltsin, fighting to keep his job after the Communists made big gains in parliamentary elections, urged Russians in a New Year message to stay the course of economic reform and not allow the political clock to be turned back in 1996.

"It is in Russia's national interests to develop democracy, to strengthen law and order and to continue economic reforms," Mr Yeltsin told guests at a New Year reception in the Kremlin. "This is the path determined by global development. If we try to abandon it, we will find ourselves in a dead end again. The year 1996 should not become a year of new shocks and reverse movement."

The Russian leader returned last week to his Kremlin office from the sanatorium where he had been convalescing after his heart attack in October. Extracts from the New Year speech

were broadcast to the nation on television.

Last year has not been a good one for Mr Yeltsin. It began with fierce fighting in Chechnya, and yesterday security forces were on alert in case of renewed tension in the Caucasian region on the first anniversary of the storming of Grozny by Russian tanks.

The conflict, which Mr Yeltsin has called the biggest disappointment of his presidency, took a heavy toll on his health as he suffered two heart attacks last year. Despite this, the 64-year-old Kremlin leader appears to be gearing up to run in presidential elections set for June. However, he has said he will wait until February before announcing his final intentions.

The pugacious Mr Yeltsin is likely to be spurred on to fight for a second term by the success of Communists and nationalists in the parliamentary elections on 17 December. Final results released last week showed that the Communists, who have



Back in the saddle: Mr Yeltsin and Russia's Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin (centre) drinking champagne at a New Year reception in Moscow

Photograph: AP

promised to strengthen state control over the economy and hold a referendum on restoring the Soviet Union, will hold 157 of the 450 seats in the Duma.

The government party, Our Home is Russia, will be the second biggest group in parliament with 55 seats. But right behind with 51 are the extreme nationalists of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, a presidential candidate who is demanding cabinet places in any government reshuffle. President Yeltsin,

who has far more power than the assembly, has resisted this, and Viktor Chernomyrdin has remained Prime Minister. Russians know they cannot afford to be apathetic in 1996, which will be a political watershed for the country.

Politics receded into the background yesterday as Muscovites queued at the last minute to buy fir trees and presents to put under them. The Orthodox Church has made a comeback, and Christmas is

now celebrated in Russia on 6 and 7 January. But the secular New Year holiday, with Father Frost and the Snow Maiden who keeps him sober on his gift-giving rounds, is still favourite.

The Russians have also adopted the Chinese system of identifying the passing years with a cycle of animals: 1996 is the Year of the Rat. "Let's just hope we don't get a rat in the Kremlin," said one Muscovite, queuing outside a kiosk to buy a rubber rat for his son.

Measles kills blue whales

Paris (AP) — Blue whales in the Mediterranean are dying of a mysterious disease that some researchers suspect may be a strain of measles.

There are only about 3,000 blue whales in the western Mediterranean. Scientists at the University of Corsica said at least four whales that succumbed to the illness had symptoms of measles, including spots.

The French medical journal *Recherche* said the whales were discovered between September and November. Their skin was mottled "like the effect of paint thinner on paint", the journal said. One whale, found near Ajaccio, Corsica had an abnormally large number of red blood cells and had suffered from a high fever, both classic symptoms of the measles.

Researchers have sent samples to a laboratory in Ireland to determine whether the fatal disease was the same one that killed more than 5,000 dolphins in the Mediterranean in 1991. The dead whales all had high levels of lead, mercury and cadmium in their systems, which would have lowered their immune systems.

IN BRIEF

Japan's PM sets date to hand over power

Tokyo — The Japanese Prime Minister, Tomiichi Murayama, will quit in April and hand over to the Trade Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, to improve the election prospects of Japan's ruling coalition, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Japan's largest circulation newspaper, reported. But Kyodo News Service quoted Mr Murayama, 71, head of the minority Socialist party, as denying that there was an agreement. AP



Pope looks better

Vatican City — The Pope (pictured yesterday at his traditional Sunday blessing) appeared in better health, telling followers to live out the last hours of 1995 well, avoiding excessive celebration, and joking that he could not see any fellow Poles in the crowd. On Christmas Day nausea caused by influenza forced the 75-year-old Pope to interrupt his appearance. AP

Nigeria's critical media go up in flames

Lagos — The office of *The News*, a Nigerian magazine critical of the military government, was set on fire, marking the third attack in two weeks on opposition media. Dapo Olorunmyi, the editor, said publication would have to be suspended. Reuters

China plans drive against Internet porn

Peking — China plans measures to stop the entry of obscene or harmful material into the country through the Internet, the official Xinhua news agency reported. AP

Indian minister escapes deadly ambush

Gauhati — Bhupinder Barman, health minister of the north-west Indian state of Assam, survived an assassination attempt in which 20 separatist guerrillas hurled grenades and fired at his car, killing three guards and a local administrator. AP

Algerian militants hunted down in hideout

Paris — Algerian security forces surrounded a Muslim fundamentalist hideout in Ain Defla, 80 miles south-west of Algiers, and killed seven rebels after they refused to surrender yesterday. Another five guerrillas were shot dead in a clash in the eastern region of Constantine. Reuters

Battles overshadow Afghan peace talks

Islamabad — Fighting among Afghan forces around Kabul dimmed prospects for peace talks offered by the government. Reports said at least two people were killed and 18 wounded when government jets bombed Maidan Shahr, a town south of Kabul held by the Taliban Islamic militia. Reuters

Revolt starts against computer clichés

Sault Ste Marie, Michigan — Computer-speak such as "cyber-space" and "online" topped a New Year list of over-used clichés that deserve to be "unplugged." "Cyber-Anything sets my teeth on edge," wrote one contributor. Reuters

Chirac appeals for unity in first statement on strikes

MARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

Jacques Chirac last night appealed to the French people to show a new spirit of unity and confidence in France and its future, following the extensive labour unrest that marked the last six weeks of 1995.

Mr Chirac was delivering the President's traditional New Year greetings to the nation, broadcast across the country on television. The presidential message has always been scrutinised for clues about any change of political course, but there was special interest in last night's broadcast. It was expected to contain Mr Chirac's first direct comments on the strikes and protests that paralysed Paris and much of France from late November — a subject on which he had been strikingly silent.

Aside from sometimes gnomish expression of support for the government's welfare re-

form policies and for the Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, personally — usually relayed by the government spokesman after the weekly Cabinet meetings — Mr Chirac had said nothing. He was not completely absent; he had a busy round of international engagements, from the Franco-phonie summit in Benin and the latest Franco-German summit, to presiding at ceremonies for the Bosnia peace treaty. He also found time to welcome back the two French pilots held hostage in Bosnia.

Some believed that Mr Chirac was deliberately drawing a distinction between his diplomatic role as president and the day-to-day business of governing the country — enshrined in the constitutional cliché, "The president presides and the government governs." His apparent non-involvement, however, at a time when the country seemed to be descending into chaos by the day, drew sharp criticism

from several senior politicians, including former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

Mr Chirac's first presidential New Year message was studied also for the signals it sent about his image of himself and the presidency. French commentators had made much in preceding days of the traditions and presentation of presidential New Year greetings.

General de Gaulle chose the *Marseillaise* and delivered his animated patriotic appeals from behind his desk in the Elysée Palace's library. François Mitterrand abandoned the *Marseillaise*, but added the European Union flag to the French tricolour.

Only Mr Giscard d'Estaing tried to temper the essential formality of the occasion by speaking from an armchair at the fireside, and once invited his wife to join him in wishing the French a happy New Year. The experiment was never repeated.

ANDREW GUMBEL

Italy's fractious political parties will all be demanding a piece of the governmental pie this week as they prepare for a parliamentary debate to end weeks of stalemate.

The country effectively entered a kind of limbo, neither entirely with a government nor entirely without one, when the Prime Minister, Lamberto Dini, offered to resign on Saturday but was told to go back to work by President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro.

It now looks increasingly likely that Mr Dini — boosted by the president's decision — will stay on as a non-political caretaker at least until the end of Italy's six-month term as president of the European Union in June. What still needs to be decided, however, is who will govern with him and what their mandate will be.

With all parties imposing

various conditions as their price for supporting Mr Dini in parliament, there has been much talk of creating a "governissimo", a kind of national unity government with elements representing the whole political spectrum. This, however, would risk turning into the sort of messy clientelistic compromise that characterised the Christian Democrat-led order during the Cold War.

Both left and right are deeply divided about the idea, although most party leaders acknowledge the need to introduce a "political" element to the government. So far, Mr Dini's 11-month-old administration has been made up of non-elected lawyers, professors, economists and other technocrats.

One major sea-change has been the attitude of Silvio Berlusconi, the media magnate and shortlived former prime minister, who has suddenly dropped his insistent calls for

immediate elections in favour of a "governissimo" with a two-year mandate. Newspapers this weekend were rife with speculation about his motives, suggesting that they were influenced more by personal than by national interests. Mr Berlusconi is due to go on trial for tax bribery on 17 January, and is believed to be involved in negotiations for an amnesty in the country's long-running corruption scandals.

Regardless of Mr Berlusconi, the prospect of elections have receded. Most commentators think they cannot now happen until the autumn — not least because September will mark the two-and-a-half year point at which first-time deputies qualify for state pensions.

Many party leaders are looking to President Scalfaro for a lead on an election date. He was expected to give some indication last night in his annual New Year's Eve address to the nation.

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Middle East peace: Monitors find bias before the Palestinian elections as negotiators on Golan Heights seek a breakthrough

Editor accuses Arafat of coercion

ERIC SILVER
Jerusalem

A Palestinian editor held for six days for refusing to make room on his front page for a laudatory piece on the PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, yesterday accused Palestinian leaders of intimidating the Palestinian press and making a mockery of the legislative elections on 20 January.

Maher Alami, executive editor of *Al Quds*, the biggest-selling Arabic daily in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, was summoned from his Jerusalem home last Monday for re-evaluating a story praising Mr Arafat's relations with the Christian churches to page eight. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theodoros, had compared the PLO chairman to the seventh-century Caliph Umar, who conquered Jerusalem for Islam but allowed Christians and Jews to keep their holy places. Mr Arafat ordered that the story be given maximum exposure.

Mr Alami has worked in the Palestinian media for 27 years. He explained yesterday that there had been no room for the story on the 24 December front page. About 80 per cent of the page was filled with election advertisements. The other 20 per cent was devoted to pictures and reports of Mr Arafat's triumphant arrival and speech in Bethlehem, two days after the Israeli withdrawal, and to Christmas celebrations there.

Before setting him free on Saturday, Mr Arafat called Mr Alami to his office in Ramallah and delivered a personal reprimand. At home yesterday, the journalist said he had been held in a detention camp in Jericho, but had not been ill-treated.

"My arrest shows that we do not have a free press," said Mr Alami. "We have a press which is afraid of the authorities. The Palestinian papers, including *Al Quds*, did not dare to publish my story. They did not even report my release."

He saw the episode as an ominous sign for Palestinian human rights. "Democracy is a matter of practice, not slogans," he insisted. "The timing, on the eve of elections, was very bad. We have to have a real free press if we are going to promote democratic politics."

Mr Arafat's dictatorial ways also came under attack at the weekend from the Paris-based *Reporters Sans Frontières*, which has a team of 15 monitoring the Palestinian elections. They reported "a very strong imbalance in the access to Palestinian public radio and television between different candidates and parties".

Between 15 and 25 December, Mr Arafat's Fatah was the only party to receive significant television coverage. The monitors logged one hour 11 minutes 35 seconds for Fatah to a mere 17 seconds for the (ex-Communist) Palestine People's Party, the only other group to be covered. The Voice of Palestine radio was a little more open, granting 20 independent candidates a total of two hours 15 minutes 49 seconds.

Mr Arafat's candidacy enjoyed one hour four minutes of attention on public radio and television. His only challenger for president, Samiha Khalil, had none. At the same time, Mr Arafat as head of the Palestinian Authority received nine hours 20 minutes on television. The writers press gave 86.3 per cent of its coverage to Mr Arafat and 13.6 per cent to Mrs Khalil.



Victory sign: An Arafat supporter declares his interest at a rally in Qalqilia, West Bank

Photograph: Jacqueline

Israel and Syria upbeat after talks

HOWARD GOLLER
Reuters

Jerusalem — Israel and Syria were upbeat yesterday after their first week of peace talks in six months, but said they had yet to forge a deal. The Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, told his cabinet of "understandings reached with the Syrian representatives on a number of issues", a cabinet communiqué said.

Israeli and Syrian representatives met for three days near Washington for their first negotiations since the breakdown in June of talks on security arrangements for the Golan Heights. Syria's chief negotiator, Walid al-Muslem, was quoted by Syria's Sana news agency as saying that the two sides discussed a number of issues "with clarity and seriousness". But he added: "No final understanding was reached on any of the subjects which were discussed."

An Israeli official said that because of progress, the sides agreed to stay over the weekend rather than report back to their respective governments. The talks resume this week.

Israel and Syria have failed to make progress in four years of negotiations. Damascus demands that the Israelis withdraw from the Golan Heights. Jerusalem insists on full peace ties

and security arrangements on the strategic plateau it captured from Syria in the 1967 Middle East war.

An Israeli cabinet minister said on Saturday that rocket attacks on northern Israel, launched from Lebanon on Friday, had raised doubts about Syria's intentions in peace talks. But there was no hint of that view in the weekly cabinet communiqué or at a briefing by an Israeli official.

The communiqué quoted Mr Peres as restating Israel's long-standing policy linking the depth of an Israeli withdrawal to the extent of peace promised by Syria. A government official said the Prime Minister, who has made a deal with Syria a top priority since taking over in November from the assassinated Yitzhak Rabin, also linked the timetable for a withdrawal to the speed with which peace is enacted, saying: "He won't agree to a slow peace and a fast, quick withdrawal."

The Syrians had shown some understanding for Israel's demands for economic arrangements in a peace deal, the official said. Israel has said it wants trade and tourism with Syria. The two sides, he added, had agreed to hold more comprehensive talks than in the past. "If we have a problem on a specific issue, we can still make progress on the other issues," he said.

Judge to rule on Israeli's plea to 'die with dignity'

Jerusalem (AP) — A judge in Tel Aviv yesterday ordered doctors not to use support systems to preserve the life of a former fighter pilot until he rules on the man's request to "die with dignity".

District Judge Moshe Talgam issued the injunction not to connect Itai Arad to a respiratory system for the next seven days until his final decision is published, said Mr Arad's lawyer, Yitzhak Hoshen.

Euthanasia is illegal in Israel. But Israeli courts have allowed

doctors some discretion in how they treat terminally ill patients.

"It is a matter of value and most judges will take the easy way out and say no (to euthanasia). But I'd like to hope that the injunction ruling indicates that we are going to see some more intervention from the court," Mr Hoshen said.

Mr Arad, 47, has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and is seeking court intervention to prevent treatment that would prolong his life in order to "die with dignity", Mr Hoshen said.

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Taiwan braces for fresh tension with China

TERESA POOLE
Peking

Taiwan's President, Lee Teng-hui, spoke yesterday of his hopes for "further breakthroughs" in relations with China, despite widespread expectations that the mainland will resume provocative military manoeuvres near the island in the run up to Taiwan's first fully-democratic presidential elections in March.

In Peking, the Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, reiterated the mainland's hardline position that any attempt to block Taiwan's reunification with the

mainland would fail. "The Chinese people will eliminate all interference and accomplish the reunification of the motherland," he said in a message broadcast on state television's main evening news.

President Lee also said: "China must be united and its people should become amalgamated." But he added that 1996 would be "a year to expand Taiwan's international presence", a comment that will infuriate Peking, which is still smarting after Mr Lee's June visit to the United States.

The outlook for Sino-Taiwan relations over the next few

months is bleak, given Peking's determination to undermine public support for Mr Lee before the unprecedented poll.

Reports in Hong Kong last month said the People's Liberation Army was planning to restart war games in February, including precision aerial bombing off the Taiwan coast. Mr Lee, viewed by China as a supporter of *de facto* independence for the island state, is the firm favourite in opinion polls to win the presidential race.

In separate remarks to a religious group, Mr Lee urged China to "adopt pragmatic approaches" to the relationship.

Taiwan's Prime Minister, Lien Chan, added his weight to Mr Lee's conciliatory comments, and repeated calls for a resumption of bilateral talks between Taipei and Peking.

"It is useless for both sides to merely exchange verbal messages in the air... It's most important to resume talks as soon as possible," Mr Lien said yesterday. Peking halted talks between the two sides in June because of Mr Lee's US trip.

A measure of the deterioration in relations could be seen at the weekend, when Taiwan's Transport Ministry was reported to be urging direct

exchange of weather data with mainland China. At present, Taiwan obtains meteorological information about China from US and Japanese consulting companies, the Taipei-based *China Times* said.

Quiet diplomacy is the last thing on Peking's mind, however, as it gears up for Taiwan's presidential election. The Chinese government's bellicose military exercises and sabre-rattling appeared to pay off in December's parliamentary elections in Taiwan. Mr Lee's ruling Kuomintang (KMT) party only narrowly retained its majority, with its share of the vote

falling to 46 per cent. The emerging pro-reconciliation New Party, in contrast, tripled its number of seats.

The election came after months of intimidation by China. Its attempt to frighten voters from supporting Mr Lee's KMT or the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party culminated at the end of November with heavily publicised military manoeuvres in what Peking termed the "war-zone" off its east coast. Television showed amphibious landings and extensive firepower, to press home Peking's message that it reserves the right to

invade what it considers a renegade province if Taiwan moves to independence. Last June, the Chinese military conducted missile tests into the sea just north of the island.

Peking's tactics are increasingly polarising public opinion in Taiwan. The DPP's share of the vote held steady in the parliamentary elections, but the party's leaders had hoped for a better performance before China embarked on its strategy of confrontation. Other voters shifted their allegiance from the KMT to the New Party, which was founded by breakaway KMT hardliners who want di-

alogue with the mainland over possible future reunification. The New Party is exploiting widespread fears that continued tension across the Taiwan Strait, which has caused a stock market collapse, could affect the island's huge trade and investment business with the mainland.

Ordinary mainland Chinese, bombarded with official propaganda, are mostly unaware of the radical reforms to Taiwan's political system since the late 1980s. In the space of less than a decade, the island has moved from an authoritarian military regime towards democracy.



It's a gas: Plumes of steam rising in front of the famous Macy's department store. Few New Yorkers know where the steam comes from

Photograph: Mike Bealing

Why stories about the steam are a lot of hot air

A recent night in New York City. It is so cold they have turned off the yuletide lights on the Empire State Building that bathe the top two tiers in red and green, and transformed it instead into an upturned icicle of glacier blue. The computerised Christmas display across the street from my office building, all moving parts and recorded carols, has stuttered to a petrified halt. The pavements, though, are scalding.

All year, even in the worst summer heatwaves, you can see it in New York. But it is never more obvious than on Arctic nights such as these. Steam. It seeps in clouds from the gaps around a thousand manhole covers: it escapes in tiny wisps from cracks between the stones in the sidewalk and small fissures in the tarmac in the street; or it rushes noisily in great plumes from stove-pipes driven into the ground by city

workmen — usually in the middle of busy road junctions, to cause maximum gridlock.

For visitors from abroad, it is part of the magic that makes New York New York, like the yellow cabs or the skyline. If you have not been here, you have surely seen it in the old gangster movies — the scene under the rattling tracks of the elevated subway with the swirl of mist around the mobster's car.

But what is it, this steam? Can New York be so full of sin that Hell is right there, beneath the concrete crust? Or what terrible machinery is at work beneath us, giving Gotham its pulse, that no one has ever told us about?

"Alligators making tea" is the answer I offered our five-year-old son when he enquired as to its origin. He knows the explanation is daft, but seems satisfied, enjoying the fantasy of a million alligators going about

NEW YORK DAYS

their business under the city and ceaselessly boiling kettles. He peers down gratings and the steel doors of cellar shafts looking for snouts, just in case.

Ask resident New Yorkers about the steam and chances are you will not get a convincing reply. I have been answered with shrugs — so what if the streets steam? they have always steamed — or with a variety of implausible suggestions.

Among these, the most popular is that it comes from the subway trains. As far as I know, they are electric these days, and I have never seen so much as a hint of steam in any of the stations. Next come the sewers. Human waste may be tepid. Perhaps it has a tendency to ferment on its way to the ocean. But since when did it boil?

Here, then, are the facts: the sandstone and mud of Manhattan island are threaded through not only with train tunnels, telephone wires, billion vaults, car parks and such like, but with a 103-mile-long labyrinth of steel piping carrying highly-pressurised, 400-degree-hot steam.

Operated by Con Edison, the power company that keeps city's bulbs burning, the pipes make up the largest steam-heating network in the world.

With giant boilers located around Manhattan, the system delivers steam to heat in the winter and power air-conditioning in the summer, to some 2,200 office buildings, including the one I am in now, from below Wall Street all the way up to 97th Street in the north.

It has been servicing New York for more than a century. The first to lay pipes was the Steam Heating and Power Company, formed in 1879 by a Wallace Andrews, who subsequently merged his business with a rival, the New York Steam Company. The initials NYS Co can still be seen stamped on some of the manhole covers. The first customer in 1882 was the United Bank Building in the financial district. The company prospered as building owners opted to take its service rather than install boilers of their own.

Thus the system is of a certain age and leaks a little. Where the steam is escaping only slowly beneath Manhattan's teeming avenues, it tends to create dangerous bulges in the tarmac, which eventually cave in to create deep potholes. These demand visits by the city's wonderfully designed "Jolt Elimination Teams".

In August 1989, a pipe exploded beneath the Gramercy Park neighbourhood, propelling a geyser of scalding mud and rock 18 storeys high. The eruption killed three, injured two dozen and led to the evacuation of hundreds of families. The event was all the more calamitous as it hurled large amounts of asbestos into the environment. Since then, Con Edison has stripped asbestos, now known to be carcinogenic, from pipes and manhole covers.

So grave a disaster might, you might have thought, dispelled the riddle of the city's steam for good. Perhaps New Yorkers just have short memories. Either that or they prefer mystery to reality. One thing is for certain: the next time I feel the pavement boiling beneath my feet, I will be out of here.

David Usborne

First feline claws his way back to the top

While Bill and Hillary Clinton have had their ups and downs in the opinion polls in their three years in the White House, the First Cat, Socks, appears to have maintained his popularity while keeping a low profile. Until the holiday season began, Socks, a black cat named for his white paws, hadn't been seen in public for a while. But the appearance of Christmas trees throughout the White House, festooned with glistening, dangling ornaments from across the nation — plus an influx of children who came to hear President Clinton read "Twas the Night Before Christmas" — have brought the famous feline into the open again. The children all wanted to see Socks, and he obliged by sitting on Mrs Clinton's lap and purring.

So far as could be seen, he didn't knock over any trees or break any ornaments. But White House "insiders", according to the less-than-reliable *Weekly World News*, say Socks is a menace to many of the nation's treasures. The cat, according to the tabloid, has destroyed antique furniture, paintings, china and historic documents worth thousands of dollars.

Suggesting that "this demon with whiskers" be turned into "a nice fur hat", the paper claims Socks's offences include clawing and urinating on a love seat brought from Paris by Thomas Jefferson in 1804; chewing the corners off a Persian rug given to Abraham Lincoln by the King of Siam in 1860; using the Revolutionary War hero Paul Revere's wooden leg as a scratching post; and eating three stars off the first American flag, made by Betsy Ross.

Perhaps it is all Republican propaganda, or disinformation by dog-lovers. After all, Socks gets fan letters from around the country, and sends out thank-you notes signed with a paw

MISSING PERSON
No 47: Socks

print. Washington shops still offer a variety of Socks items, including T-shirts, greeting cards, soft toys and books, though they are interspersed with Newt Gingrich paper dolls and such. Socks became the first cat in the White House in 12 years when the Clintons moved from Arkansas in January 1993. He is known to enjoy chasing mice and taunting spiders, and is reported to have dug up a flower bed or two. In one of "his" early books, "Socks Goes to Wash-



Socks: Did he break the Reagans' china?

ington: *The Diary of America's First Cat*, he "confesses" to breaking Nancy Reagan's china to relieve boredom.

With the holiday season winding down and the entertaining almost over, Socks can be expected to retreat to the private world he shares with 15-year-old Chelsea Clinton.

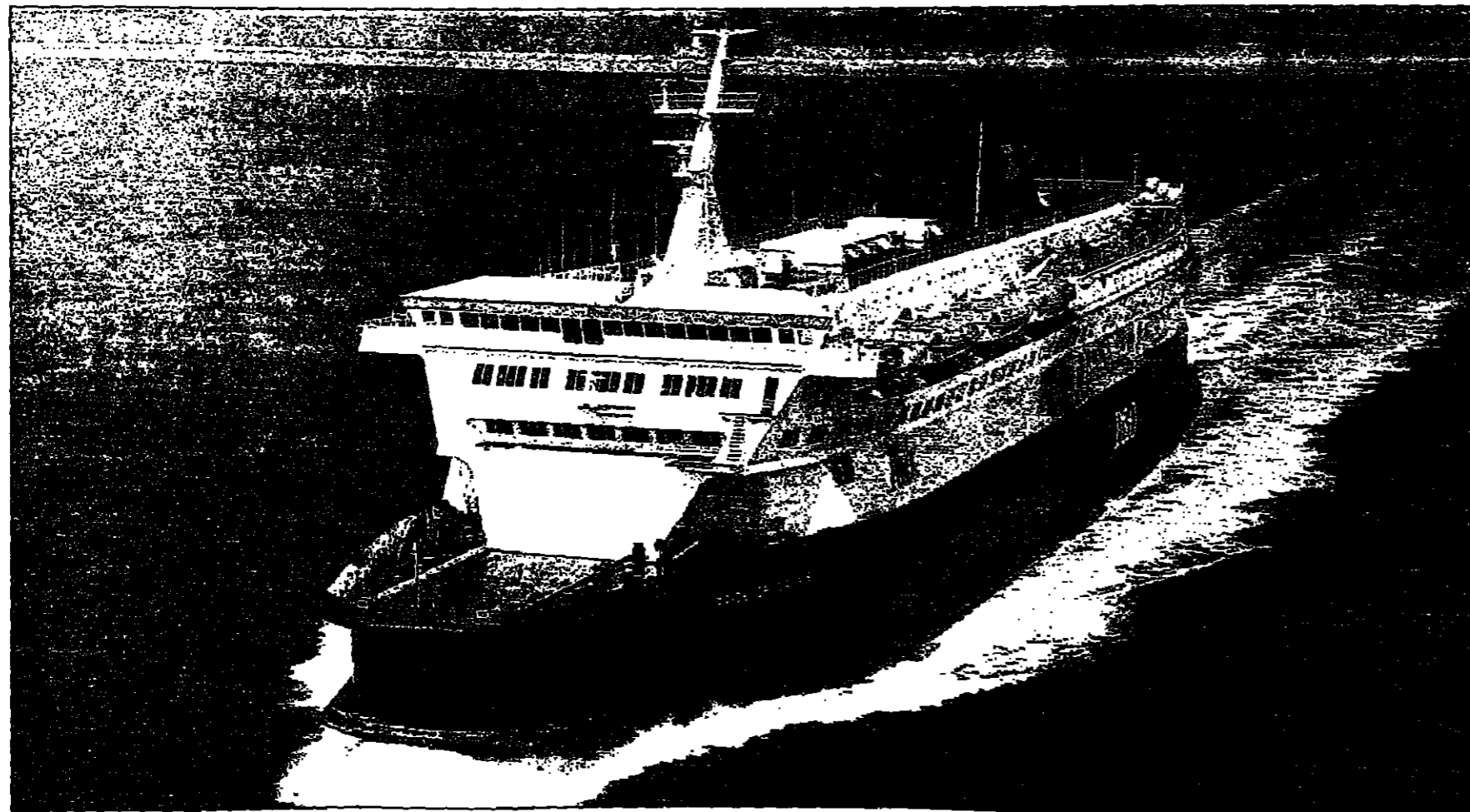
Gone, at least until the 1996 presidential election gets into full swing, are the days when he would venture on to the White House lawn (only to be besieged by photographers) or climb atop a podium bearing the seal of the President of the United States (a man who is allergic to cats).

Maryann Bird

Take a car and five to France for £10

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We would like to invite you to start the New Year with a bargain break - a day trip to France with a car plus five passengers for just £10.

We have teamed up with P&O European Ferries to offer Independent readers a range of bargain sailings departing from either Dover or Portsmouth which may be taken until April 2, 1996.

The Dover destination is Calais and the Portsmouth sailings will arrive at Cherbourg and Le Havre. Both towns are ideal for shopping, sight-seeing and gourmet eating and would make excellent bases for a short stay.

Day trip departures from Sunday to Fridays, until 15 February, 1996, cost £10 for a car and up to five passengers. Each extra passenger costs £1 and foot passengers also pay just £1.

Day trip departures from Portsmouth on Friday nights and Dover on Saturdays cost £20 for a car and up to five passengers. The cost of extra passengers and foot passengers remains unchanged.

Sailings from 16 February up till 2nd April, 1996, are £10 per car and £1 per passenger or £20 per car and £1 per passenger for Saturday sailings from Dover or Fri-

day night sailings from Portsmouth.

If you prefer to make an overnight stay in France, the cost of a 60-hour excursion is £39 for a car and up to five passengers. Extra passengers pay £4 each. Friday night departures from Portsmouth and Saturday departures from Dover are subject to a £10 surcharge. These prices do not include accommodation.

To qualify for these bargain prices you must collect four differently numbered tokens from the six we are publishing this week. Today we are publishing token one and we will give full details of how to take advantage of this offer later this week.

Token 1

network

The spy who loved me (and my laptop)

Industrial espionage is widespread in a cut-throat world. Keeping an eye on your PC just might save your business.
By Steve Boggan

Picture a scene in which a team of highly trained security men hears that a computer containing secret information has been stolen by an enemy. Taking to the air in a helicopter, the team switches on a radio receiver to pick up signals from a transmitter hidden inside the computer. Closing in, they corner their prey, surround him and retrieve the computer. The thief may be handed over to the police or, to spare embarrassment, allowed to leave.

No, this is not a script for the next James Bond movie. This is the world of corporate security as seen by some of Britain's biggest blue-chip companies.

The days when the most serious threat to travelling executives was a drunken evening during which trade secrets were indiscreetly shared are over. Today, business executives are routinely bugged, tapped, recorded, filmed and conned into leaving laptop computers unguarded long enough for spies to download their contents. No one can say how prevalent industrial espionage is, but security companies report anecdotal evidence of a huge rise in concern over the loss of commercial secrets.

"We do regular electronic sweeps to find intercepts on fax machines and bugs in boardrooms all over the country," says Peter Hewitt, European marketing director for the London-based Communication Control Systems. "But the biggest concern seems to be over the loss of information from travelling businessmen whose laptops are stolen or accessed in hotel rooms while they're having dinner in the restaurant."

Mr Hewitt's firm is negotiating with six of Britain's biggest companies over the sale of tracker devices that can be implanted in laptops. They are likely to cost in the region of £4,500 each—about three times the value of the actual computer—but the commercially sensitive information contained in the laptop is often worth far more.



Hackers at work in the film *Sneakers*: since the end of the Cold War, state intelligence agencies have turned their attention to industrial espionage

There are reports from the United States of executives offering rewards of up to \$500,000 for the return of stolen laptops. More alarmingly, security companies talk of cases in which thieves have demanded ransoms of up to \$500,000 for the return of computers.

"Not many business people are aware of just how vulnerable they are," says Gill Upton, editor-in-chief of *Business Traveler* magazine. "Many executives don't have a password on their machine, they don't use encryption [scrambling] programs and they often leave laptops unattended in their hotel rooms. They need to be made aware of the fact that many countries routinely have agents in hotels. That innocent-looking maid could be working for the secret service and she'll copy your files as soon as you leave your room."

Ms Upton tells executives of the case of the two French businessmen who travelled to China to sell a top-secret multi-million dollar missile guidance system. During the first day of negotiations, their Chinese

hosts appeared desperate to buy the system. At the end of the day, the businessmen were invited to dinner and advised to leave their possessions—including a laptop—with their driver.

The following day, the Chinese had completely changed their stance. They appeared totally uninterested in paying for plans of the system and the businessmen felt they couldn't give them away. Until, with hindsight, they realised they already had.

"With the ending of the Cold War, state secret services are turning their attentions to industrial espionage to give their own companies an edge on foreign competitors," says Ms Upton. "We tell travellers to assume their hotel rooms are bugged or their fax messages are being intercepted whenever they're on business. Certainly they should make that assumption whenever they travel in America, France, Russia, China or Korea."

Control Risks, a respected security analysis firm, issues advice to clients on the pitfalls of trading in the former Soviet

Union. Clients, they say, should never hire local people unless the prospective employee has been vetted and recommended by their embassy's trade section; they should never leave any sensitive documents or disks unattended; they should assume that older ex-government buildings are bugged.

Things get really sneaky when the former KGB gets involved, blackmailing executives or simply stealing their secrets.

Control Risks cites the example of a married businessman falling for the charms of a beautiful young woman, only to be shown an explicit video recording of their sexual encounter the following day. He was subsequently invited to co-operate with his new business partners.

But it isn't just old enemies who have turned their attentions to industrial espionage. The most commercially dangerous ally with which to do business has proved to be France.

In 1993, the *Independent* revealed the existence of a French intelligence document compiled by the Department of

Economics, Science and Technology which served as a commercial shopping list for agents, a guide to which industrial secrets France wanted most from her allies.

The shopping list included British helicopter technology from Westland, solid-rocket booster technology, satellite research and information about high-definition televisions, where European companies lagged far behind America.

It also ordered French intelligence agents to penetrate Wall Street banks, securities houses and consultants, including Citibank, Chase Manhattan and Goldman Sachs, giving top priority to finding out about investment plans in Europe. And it advised agents to pay particular attention to lawyers and consultants who are often privy to clients' secrets but who are notoriously careless with documents and on the telephone.

In the same year, the American and Canadian intelligence services issued discreet warnings to companies to assume that their executives were being bugged whenever they flew

first-class with Air France. The airline has denied that any of its employees were involved in the practice, but suspicions persist that they didn't need to be: there were hundreds of intelligence agents only too happy to plant bugs.

One security firm (which refuses to be identified) claims to have developed a system that could make snooping much simpler. "Every computer emits a frequency that can be picked up by our equipment and that allows us to read it by looking on to it manually," a senior executive of the firm told the *Independent*.

"It's a bit hit and miss at the moment, but it can be done and the technology is improving all the time."

The company claims it is already selling the equipment to intelligence agencies—something that some observers doubt—but the executive says it has been banned from supplying it to the general public. If it has developed such technology, however, it can only be a matter of time before the company spooks get hold of it.

For the time being, intelligence-gathering is far more mundane. Peter Sommer, a research fellow at the London School of Economics Computer Security Research Centre, says: "The more exotic pieces of equipment are certainly there—and the capacity of some companies for buying surveillance junk that doesn't work seems unlimited—but most intelligence is gathered in far more simple ways."

"The most common theft of information comes from the unattended computer in the office. Often industrial spies will gain access to a company as a cleaner or repair man and simply make copies on floppy disks at an unattended terminal."

"There are bugs and taps, but the amount of information that can be copied from a computer is enormous, so computers are the prime targets. Company surveillance teams also follow executives into pubs, overhearing conversations. And they gather basic information about senior personnel from newspapers and public records. It all helps

to get an edge on your rival." Even when your company has been drained of all its pricing secrets, when its commercial strategies have been siphoned off and its product development plans laid bare, you may not know it, and may continue to lose contracts to a mystery competitor who thinks you're a fool.

One such company—which remains in terrible ignorance—asked a freelance computer consultant to examine its pricing program last year. The consultant was not a security risk, but he was, he discovered later, being followed by an opposition surveillance team.

"I left my laptop in the car while I popped into a pub for lunch," he said. "When I came out, the car had been broken into and the computer had been accessed. They didn't take it, so I have to assume they just copied the pricing program. I didn't know which was worse: to tell the company directors and lose my business or not tell them and let them lose theirs."

And, business being business, he said nothing.

Will TV or PC rule the living room? Andrew North on the future of digital and online technology

Gadgets and gizmos for the new year

While 1995 has been a year of innovation, 1996 will be a year of consolidation: that is what my crystal ball tells me. We have come to the end of a frenetic period of development, in every field from telecommunications to television. Now we are going to settle down and find a use for all these discoveries.

This does not mean we will not see new products in the shops: we will, but most of them will be upgrades of existing technology. "All sorts of things are technically possible," says a spokesperson for the electronics giant Philips, "but we've got to show that people need them."

The first important product to hit the shops will be the high-density CD, or Digital Video Disc. HDCD can carry up to 18 gigabytes of data, compared

with 650 megabytes on current CDs. This is enough for a two-hour film in broadcast quality, which will revolutionise the multimedia market. The first HDCD players, aimed at PC/CD-ROM users, will cost about £500.

After all the hype about PCs and Windows 95, the humble TV set has acquired a dowdy, old-fashioned image. That will change with the first digital broadcasts by the BBC and ITV, and the arrival of Wide-screen TV (there are several models in the shops now), which will bring much higher picture and sound quality into our living rooms.

We may also see the first ultra-slim "flat screen" TVs in British shops, which do away with conventional cathode ray technology. Sony will soon re-

lease its "Plasmatroon" model, which is just 7cm deep—that means it can be hung on a wall.

Cheap digital photography will not arrive this year. Manufacturers such as Canon will be releasing new models, but they will still cost about £900. It will be a while before the digital Brownie is a stocking filler.

Unfortunately for those who are heartily sick of it, the Internet will continue to make news this year. The main thrust will be to bring the Net closer to the mainstream—it is easy for people who are already connected to forget that they are still in a tiny minority. Many electronics companies are looking at providing Net access through their TV sets. Philips already sells an add-on TV/Net pack, which works with its CD-i player. This may be the start of a

tug-of-war between the PC and TV for the position of key entertainment provider in the home. Dedicated Net access machines, such as Netsurfer, will also be pitching into the fray. The result will be a mix of both: interactive TV, bringing us closer to Bill Gates's vision of a box of tricks that does everything. But that will not materialise this year.

What will also not happen in 1996 is the completion of the high-capacity fibre-optic network necessary for the information superhighway to work. It will be a long time before every household is linked up. Only then will calling up movies and music via your phone line be feasible. Media, software, hardware and telecoms giants will continue to bet large sums on this becoming a reality, in

the hope of cashing in on the bonanza. The year will see yet more strategic partnerships along the lines of Microsoft's recent deal with NBC and News Corporation's link-up with MCI.

Meanwhile, what matters is the battle between Microsoft and the big Net software developers, such as Netscape and Sun Microsystems. The race is on to produce an easy-to-use application that will make accessing and ordering Net services as simple and intuitive a task as changing channels on TV.

Sun's groundbreaking Java and HotJava code will be crucial. This software system works on all computer platforms and combines the capabilities of CD-Rom with the real-time interactivity of the web. Netscape is bundling Java with its latest Web browsers and Sun is giving it away free on the Net. With Microsoft due to ship in a rival, the Blackbird, in the next six months, this year will probably decide which format wins.

The new year will see a punch-up between the no-frills Net access providers, such as NetCom in the US and the UK's Demon Internet, and the online companies, such as CompuServe and America Online. All the main online companies now provide full Net access, and are gaining customers at a prodigious rate. But as their special services become widely available on the Net, their long-term future looks far from certain.

Europe will be one of the key battlegrounds over the next 12 months, with Europe Online and the America Online/Ber-

telsman combine challenging CompuServe's current monopoly across the region. Demon is joining in too, with plans to become a Europe-wide provider by the end of the year. But lurking in the shadows is BT, which is set to become a mass-market Net provider in the UK within the next six months. Other European telecoms giants may follow suit in their respective areas. Can Demon and the other Net start-ups survive?

Net shopping will take off this year. Some analysts predict more than \$500m worth of goods and services will be purchased via the Web, compared with an estimated \$60m in 1995. This will boost efforts to develop digital cash and encourage more transactions on to the Net. Online banks already exist in the US and such services should appear in the UK soon.

But hackers are likely to become more active in response. Security consultants are warning of an upsurge in attacks over the next few years, as more and more people use the Net.

On the hardware side, even more powerful PCs will emerge, but there are unlikely to be any great innovations. Sony will enter the PC market for the first time. With luck we will see smaller and longer-lasting batteries, with which it will become feasible to build mobile phones and even Global Positioning Systems into laptop computers. The news that mobile phone charges are falling, and the spread of high-quality digital networks such as GSM, will boost demand for mobile communication.

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Setting a trend: shopping on the Internet for ordinary goods such as shirts will take off in 1996

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Across the frozen fields of another childhood

I'm six-thirty and Jacob and I are getting ready to go to an "ice spectacular" when the doorbell rings.

There's a girl - maybe nine or ten - pink nylon anorak too small, neck and wrists exposed, long blonde hair crinkling in the cold. She shivers - and falters into song: "We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

"Hold on," - as I speak, her voice (never exactly enthusiastic) trails off, eyes turn stony, "are you on your own?"

She stares at me, bored and sullen now, and a sad, spasmy shiver runs through her body. "No," - glancing furtively behind her.

"Who's with you?"

"My Dad." She bites her lip.

"Where? Show me." We march down the path. Just around the corner, behind the dustbins, a

man stands lighting a cigarette, hands cupped against the freezing wind. "Are you with her?"

"Yeah," - smoke escapes through his nose.

"You're her Dad?"

"Yeah." He's about 20. New leather jacket, tired face. I look at him, unsure of what to say next.

He gives me a weary frown - you shrug, looks away. The child bites her nails suddenly and furiously, then he yanks her arm and they walk off.

I stand in the hall a moment, then, realising we're late, go up to Jacob's room to hurry him. But I find him sitting on his bed in tears. "Jacob, what is it?" - these are serious, trembly, held-in tears - "What's the matter?"

"Well," the sobs stop his breath, drawn his voice, "you know how my kitten sometimes likes to jump up on the wash basin? Well, she had this bit of toothpaste on her fur," - and he cries, harder - "I

just tried to trim it off and ..."

"Where is she?" I grab his shoulders. "Tell me now."

But the kitten is lying on the floor in the middle of a half-constructed Lego train track, batting the smallest bricks gently with her paws. There's a little, greyish bald patch on her side. I pick her up, check she isn't cut.

Jacob throws himself on the bed again, sobbing. I take him in my arms, but he pulls away. "I just started snipping," he cries, "and I couldn't stop."

"You could have hurt her, you know that, don't you? She isn't a toy, she's your pet. You can break toys but not animals. You gave yourself a bit of a shock, didn't you?"

A look of pure pain crosses his face. "I'm so ashamed of myself."

We drive across London to the Albert Hall to see "Beauty and the Beast on Ice" - tickets



JULIE MYERSON

courtesy of Auntie Mandy - a serious treat because it's way past Jacob's bedtime. The air's black and heavy with cold - fairy lights in shop windows, taxis pumping clouds of exhaust into the night. Jacob sits in silence - subdued excitement.

The Albert Hall's filled with women in mink coats and backswayed blonde hair and young tourists with tired, East European eyes. The building's cold, draughty, oppressively smokeey, the harsh brown bar brimming

with angry people reaching over one another.

Waiting for the auditorium to open, we sit huddled together on the freezing line steps. Jacob drinks half his orangeade and then feels sick. "How long will it take for her fur to grow back?" he asks gravely.

"A while," - I'm disinclined to lie to him about this.

"Every time I look at her, I'll remember what I did. She'll never forgive me."

I hug him, stroke his head, sniff his hot, schoolboy hair. "She's already forgiven you, she knows you didn't mean it and you won't do it again."

In the auditorium, music thumps from a speaker near our heads and we wait. Jacob suddenly climbs on to my knee - big and impossible and gangly at almost seven. Very soon he won't want to do this, I think, and pull him closer: all those limbs, that

lively weight - the boy who one day won't allow himself to kiss me.

The Russian All-Stars skate on - blue satin costumes and bright, balletic smiles and flashing blades. Magnificent skating, histrionic gesturing, little plot. I feel Jacob's spine stiffen with excitement and then he sighs with pleasure. "The best show I've ever been to in my whole life," he pronounces at the first interval.

"Better than Power Rangers," at the second. Staring, we hunt the many bars for a sandwich, find an exhausted-looking egg mayonnaise bap, take a bite each and leave it.

The show comes down and we escape while they're still throwing bouquets. People stop and light cigarettes as they emerge and walk down the steps. The air buzzes with cold. "Did you ever do anything bad to Sparky?" Jacob asks me as we get into the

car. Sparky was a Collie - the family pet of my childhood.

A sudden memory of another Christmas: Sparky, dashing through a snow-covered field, a trail of paw-holes behind her.

Snow on her pointy nose, her dark widow's peak. Ecstatic barking. "I can't remember anything in particular," I tell him. "But I'm sure I did. I've done lots of bad things in my life." In a quick, unbearable flash, the little-girl-on-the-doorstep's face comes back to me. The grey exhaustion in her eyes. I should have rung the police.

I squeeze Jacob's knee. He's thoughtful. Then, "I love you, Mummy," - this is something he says when life suddenly feels good or makes sense.

"I love you, too," I say, but I'm somewhere else. I'm in that long-ago frozen field with my sisters and our dog, laughter ricocheting - cry and forever - in that perfect snow lightness.

The will to win, win, win!

Entering competitions can be a way of life. David Cohen talks to three die-hard 'compers'

They lurk all about us: in the nooks and crannies of newspapers, on the back of cereal boxes, underneath deodorant cans, on bottle-tops, in leaflets left in supermarkets. We see them but never notice them, screening out the words "Win!" and "Prize" like so much junkmail. We're talking competitions, brand-product consumer competitions, thousands every month, which most of us dismiss as an activity that makes train-spotting seem exciting.

But more than 150,000 Britons disagree. For them, filling out entry forms and conjuring up snappy slogans in order to win that elusive car, holiday, mountain bike, kettle, video, T-shirt or baseball cap has become a pivotal, sometimes obsessive, part of their lives. They are known as "compers" and they can spot the word "competition" from 100 yards.

Compers are usually solitary and secretive about what they do. It is not hard to see why. Last year, £120m worth of prizes were won and in 1996, the figure is expected to rise to £150m. The fewer people that know about this, they reckon, the better their chances of winning. Many compers (170,000 of them) subscribe to *Competitors Companion* and *Prize Draw Winner*, the twin pillars of the comping subculture, which are available by subscription only (£15 a year). The magazines analyse winning slogans, offer tips and provide a comprehensive list of the two types of competition available each month: the simple prize draw, where you fill in your name and address on a postcard, send it off and first out of the hat is the winner (skill factor - zero); and ones that require you to answer a few simple questions and complete a slogan (the purists' favourite).

Mark Shapiro, a manager of Chartsearch, publisher of *Com-*

petitors Companion and *Prize Draw Winner*, says: "More than 60 per cent of subscribers are women and about a third are middle-class pensioners. Compers are usually people with time on their hands."

For the sociable compers, there is the National Association of Competitors' Clubs, which has 50-odd clubs around the country and where compers get together in pubs and hotel rooms to swap slogans, trade entry forms, socialise and brag about all the useful and useless prizes that they've won.

Alice Cunningham, 33 and single, is a housing officer in Devon.

A year ago, while I was convalescing after emergency surgery, I started doing consumer competitions as occupational therapy. At first it was the odd one here and there, but recently I have become addicted: I enter 80 competitions a month and when I'm not doing them, I'm thinking about them. I keep all my entry forms, stamps and postcards in a box. It's ideal because if I go away for the weekend I take it with me. My friends think I'm nuts but then they're also quite envious when I tell them I've won a week in Prague.

I read books on how to write winning slogans and study it seriously, like you would a subject at university. I prefer competitions that require slogans and a bit of skill. I'm loath to share my secrets, but as a general rule rhymes and puns are good, as long as they're not too clever because the slogan needs to be understood by the masses.

I never used to be superstitious, but I always go to a particular post-box to post my entry forms. You could say I have developed a meaningful relationship with my post-box. I have won 10 times in all,



Born winner: Leslie Jerman chopped down an apple tree to make room for his greenhouse, before he heard he'd won it. Sure enough, he had

including a bottle of brandy (I don't like brandy but it was exciting anyway); three compact discs (I don't have a CD player); theatre tickets to something I wouldn't have chosen to see; a set of champagne glasses, and a kitchen knife. The buzz is winning, the prize is secondary.

My mother says it's a "babyish thing" to do. I think she means "unsophisticated". I wouldn't try to defend it on that score, but for me it's deeply relaxing, a way of cutting off from problems of day-to-day life.

I subscribe to *Competitors Companion* and *Prize Draw Winner* and get entry forms by subscribing to a free database called Teldata - you send off 30 competition slips and you get 30 posted to you in return. My main cost is stamps - about £16 a month. I make my own postcards. It's a whole new world that I never knew existed.

For me the competition thing has been like joining a club that makes me feel normal. I'm quite eccentric and I get obsessive about strange things, like the sea and the colour blue, so it's a relief to know that what I do is shared by a hidden community of thousands of individuals. I want to find a holiday company that offers a themed

package tour for people who enter competitions. If I can't find one I'm going to organise it myself.

Leslie Jerman, 74, grew up in East Ham, east London, one of 18 brothers and sisters. He became London correspondent for the 'Scotsman'. He is retired and lives in Epping Forest, Essex.

When I was eight, I wrote an essay for a local newspaper, the *East Ham Echo*, and won a globe of the world. It was the first competition I ever entered and, apart from a hull during the war when there weren't many competitions around, I haven't stopped since.

This week I won a £300 video recorder in a post office draw in which you had to answer four easy questions. My entry was simply the first out of the hat. Most of my wins are more calculated though.

I don't usually enter competitions in national newspapers because they get up to 500,000 entries and the odds are so poor. But in local newspapers, the competition is hardly there at all.

I've won about 120 prizes in my life. Each time the sense that I have pitted my wits against

thousands of others and won is a boost to my ego. I won a microwave oven in an Iceland competition for frozen food in which I wrote: "It's the finest food you ever thaw". I gave the microwave away without even unpacking it. Some of my memorable prizes include 120 pints of Yorkshire Bitter; a magnum of champagne, which I'm keeping to bathe in one day; half a hundredweight of butter spread over six months (I was trying to lose weight so I traded it in for gin and had a party); a cricket bat; a tennis racket; a ball-bearing

ing scooter from Hamleys when I was 12 years old; two tea-sets; two electric shavers (my son commandeered one); £500 cash in Vernon's Spot-the-Ball (it's a bit of a bore filling in all those crosses); and a two-week vacation for two in Russia (which was the last place I wanted to go so I gave it to my daughter).

I usually know when I've won. I cut down an apple tree in my garden to make space for a £1,000 greenhouse that I was convinced I would win. My wife said: "Why have you cut it down?" I said: "I've won a

greenhouse." "When did you hear?" she asked. "I haven't. Why don't you accept what I say?" I said: "I was very basic. A few days later the phone rang and they told me that I'd won the greenhouse."

I read eight newspapers a day and I find competitions in all of them. It's a disease that I have. I often enter competitions for prizes that I don't want. It's all about winning. But I don't buy products to enter competitions. I'm not that barzy.

Sheila Wilson, 66, a single mother and former antiques dealer, began entering consumer competitions six months ago after she retired and her three children had moved out. Her home in London resembles a junk yard of cut-out newspapers and magazines.

When I was seven years old, I won a pair of braces in the school raffle, but that was the only prize I ever won in my life. I never gambled bringing up three kids on my own - there was no money for that - but now that I'm supposed to be retired, I lay my hands on anything that says "Enter".

At first I entered one or two a week, but now it's mounting up to about 75 a month. Every morning after breakfast, I spend an hour rooting around the newspapers looking for competitions, filling out the forms and posting them off. It gives structure to my day, something to focus on as a way of adjusting to retirement. It's a cheap form of therapy.

So far I have won two crumby rings (they looked like diamonds in the advertisement, but turned out to be Barbie-doll jewellery), a large bottle of rum and a stainless steel hip-flask.

I only enter competitions with easy questions where the answers are given in the blurb. Like for the rum, it was: "What is the capital of Barbados?" What are the ingredients of rum? The hook for me is getting something for nothing. I'd love to win a trip round the world.

I'm quite secretive and I have told very few people about my new obsession. It is gambling, after all, and, having been schooled in a French convent, I feel rather guilty. There is a loneliness and a desperation about it. My daughter doesn't approve. But with the children grown up, you think: where do I go from here? There is so little hope in England. John Major is a useless wimp; Labour won't make any difference. I get my hope from competitions.

Stop snoring and start partying, it's 1996

Why is everyone so unenthusiastic about the forthcoming year? Maybe a lively slogan would help, suggests Alix Sharkey

Did you notice how flat the celebrations were last night? Nobody really seemed interested, did they? All over the country the annual festivities were blighted by an overwhelming sense of lethargy, as heavy-lidded party poopers refused to put their whole selves in, much less do the hokey cokey and turn around. Of course, people still had a knees-up, got drunk and did naughty things with other people's spouses. But it was nothing like the old days, when the promise of 365 brand new days and four fresh seasons had the masses shaking with excitement.

The problem with this new year, and the three to follow, is that everybody is saving themselves. The accepted wisdom is "Don't shoot your bolt, hold out for the Big One".

That rasping noise you can hear in the background is the sound of Europe snoring. The whole continent is taking a disco nap, in order to be fresh for the Mother of all New Year's Eve Parties. I'm talking about 31 December 1999, of course.

Meanwhile, poor old 1996 has been sold short. Maybe all it needs is a slogan, something to bring us round as we sleepwalk through the last half of the last decade of the last century of the millennium. You know the sort of thing: "96 - Even Sexier Than '89". Or "96 - It's The Same Upside Down". Even the sloppiest slogan can work wonders as long as it has a triumphalist tone. For example, "Glasgow - It's Miles Better". Miles better than what? Miles better than walking all the way to Inverness?

No matter: with this mane slogan and the not altogether convincing mantle of European City of Culture, Glasgow managed to get its draconian drinking laws relaxed and has been miles better for it ever since.

The ability of slogans and other worthless epithets to work miracles on public perception has not been lost on those keen-eyed bureaucrats in the European Union, who naturally have a vested interest in making us excited about otherwise uninspiring moments in history - the bigger the year, the bigger the budget, n'est-ce pas?

This is why, despite public

apathy, EU officials say there is much to celebrate this year. For instance, 1996 has been declared the European Year of Lifelong Learning, during which special efforts will be made to raise public awareness of the benefits of higher education among adults. John Major is said to be taking a keen interest in this project.

Then there is wonderful Copenhagen, which from today becomes the European City of Culture, the crown being passed on from that other bustling metropolis, Luxembourg. On a national level, Italy takes over the presidency of the European Council from Spain,

meaning that things which previously couldn't be done until tomorrow will now be done this afternoon, but only if you bribe the appropriate official.

More exciting Euro-news: from today the EU Units of Measurement Directive comes into force for food sold loose, including fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and fish. Beer and cider, as well as road signs, will continue to employ imperial measurements.

Other tremendous changes await us on the home front. Coaches are henceforth banned from using the fast lane on motorways, and their maximum speed is restricted to 65

mph - a whole 5mph less than the national limit. Not only that, but, following accident research, a review of this new law will take place in two years, which gives us yet another tantalising reason (as if we needed one) to look forward to 1998.

As of today, the one-year visitor's passport becomes invalid. From this historic moment onwards, a full 10-year passport will be needed for foreign travel. Given the ever-lengthening queues for charter flights at Gatwick airport, it may be necessary to increase this to 20 years by June.

Also today, Michael Heseltine takes over the Buying Ser-

vices Agency, which procures goods for universities and the NHS, and the Security Facilities Agency, which provides security for the Government, including guarding the Crown Jewels. Presumably, both will shortly be privatised.

This may seem like small potatoes compared with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of apartheid, but 1996 still has the potential for intrigue and excitement. England will host football's European Championships this summer, and already there is a palpable sense that history might repeat itself. Not that we have a chance of winning, of course, but perhaps the trophy might be stolen, as the World Cup was 30 years ago, and subsequently recovered by the reincarnation of Pickles

the dog. With a man called Tarzan looking after the Crown Jewels, anything could happen.

Yes, '96 could be a year to remember, if we weren't so eager to forget it already. All that's needed, I'm convinced, is a slick slogan to capture the imagination. Now let's see, what rhymes with six? Chicks, kicks, licks, frozen Margarita mix... there seems to be a pattern emerging. I think the best thing would be for myself and a few bright young researchers to apply for an EU grant and book into a Swiss ski chalet for a fondue-fuelled brainstorming session. We could report back in mid-January. No point in rushing into anything. After all, this annual sloganeering thing is a whole new box of tricks.

obituaries / gazette

Lord Collison

Harold Collison, former General Secretary of the National Union of Agricultural Workers, was a man dedicated to the improvement of the working and living conditions of rural workers. Although the NUAW's name referred to agricultural workers it included virtually every worker engaged in rural activities - from poultry and forestry workers to gamekeepers and county council roadmen.

Collison's political leanings were more of the Tony Blair than the Michael Foot persuasion, but he was a dedicated Labour supporter of firm trade unions and he had no hesitation in expressing his views.

Elected as General Secretary on the death of Alf Dann in 1953, he took over the leadership of the union at a critical time as the agricultural labour force was commencing a dramatic numerical decline which has continued rapidly ever since. Inevitably union membership similarly fell, but Collison, like his successors, made every conceivable effort to recruit members despite the



Collison: rural trade unionism

falling numbers of potential recruits.

He was born in London in 1909 and first attended Hay Currie LCC School, Poplar, and then the Crypt School, Gloucester, until he was 17 years of age. He started work on a farm in Gloucester as a poultryman and later became a general farmworker. He joined the union and was immediately an active member; in 1941 became the Secretary of its Gloucester County Committee. He also gave his time to the Labour Party, acting as the Stroud Branch Secretary.

In 1946 he obtained employment in the head office of the union in Glynns Road, London, and began travelling the country, attending hundreds of recruiting meetings. He became one of the best-known figures in rural trade unionism and, by the time of the 1953 election for the position of General Secretary, he topped the poll with a substantial majority.

At the annual conference of the Trades Union Congress the same year Collison was elected on to the TUC's General Council. He was regularly re-elected on to the General Council every year and in September 1964 he was elected to the position of Chairman of the TUC.

A problem of continuous dispute and acrimony between the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and the NUAW had been, almost from time immemorial, the existence of the agricultural tied cottage which enabled an employer to sack a worker and gain almost immediate possession of the cottage, even if the worker had no alternative accommodation available. Harold Collison attacked this problem with vigour and although during his period of office he was not successful in seeing this scourge removed from the agricultural scene he nevertheless laid the foundation of the 1977 Act of Parliament which eventually eased a lot of the difficulties.

In 1965, at the invitation of the then prime minister, Harold Wilson, Harold Collison was raised to the House of Lords, taking the title of Baron Collison. During this period, in addition to his work as General Secretary of the NUAW which became by the end of his tenure the NUAW, the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers, he was a member of the TUC and of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), meeting in Geneva, where he was able to become involved in assisting rural workers throughout the world.

He resigned as General Secretary in August 1969 to take up the position of Chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission. He continued to devote his time and energies to the House of Lords although failing health during the past few years made him less active. The annual dinner of the British Socialist Agricultural Society was always held in the Lords under his patronage.

Jack Boddy

Harold Francis Collison, trade unionist; born London 10 May 1909; General Secretary, National Union of Agricultural Workers 1953-69; member, TUC General Council 1953-69; Chairman, Social Insurance and Industrial Welfare Committee, TUC 1957-69; President, International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers 1960-76; CBE 1961; created 1964 Baron Collison; Chairman, Supplementary Benefits Commission 1969-75; President, Association of Agriculture 1976-84; married 1946 Ivy Hanks; died 29 December 1995.



Kaidanovsky, left, in the title role of Tarkovsky's *Stalker*, 1963

Photograph: Jeanne Vronskaya Archive

Alexander Kaidanovsky

Alexander Kaidanovsky remains unforgettable for his appearance in the title role of Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Stalker* (1963).

He became famous for the role even before the film opened, after Tarkovsky showed it privately to colleagues and friends. *Stalker* portrayed the Soviet Union as a mass concentration camp; Kaidanovsky and his fellow actor Ivan Laptev represented the country's conscience - namely Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who had just been put on a plane by the KGB and forced into exile, and the physicist Andrei Sakharov, who had been harassed by the KGB.

Later, it became clear that the film was dedicated to Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov. It stood little chance, and was banned in 1978 by Leonid Brezhnev's Goskino (the state cinema organisation), acting on a decision from the highest level of the Politburo. The Soviet press made a ferocious attack on Tarkovsky and Kaidanovsky

and the Strugatsky brothers, who had written the script. But this did not stop a copy of *Stalker* reaching the 1980 Cannes Film Festival, where it was shown to great acclaim. It was briefly released in Moscow, and then disappeared.

A graduate of the Shchukin theatrical school in Moscow, Kaidanovsky made his debut at the Eugene Vakhtangov Theatre in 1969. Shortly afterwards he was invited to join MKHAT, Moscow Arts Theatre, the best classical theatre in Russia, a rare privilege for a 25-year-old graduate. He made his film debut in *Years Among Strangers* and *A Stranger Among Yours* (1974), and over the next few years appeared in some two dozen films, including the satirical comedy *Diamonds for Dictators* (1976) and *The Life of Beethoven* (1980), but remained comparatively unknown.

Tarkovsky, meanwhile, was Russia's most celebrated film director. His second film, *So-*

laris, had been banned after its sensational reception at the 1972 Cannes Festival, while *The Mirror* (1975) had been slammed by the Soviet press. Tarkovsky habitually used the same actors, but, impressed by the looks and the acting technique of Kaidanovsky in *Diamonds*, invited him to play the title role in his new film.

Stalker was to be based on *Picnic on the Road* (1972) by the Polish science fiction writer Stanislaw Lem. *Solaris* had been taken from another of his books. The script was adapted by the Russian science fiction writers Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. Tarkovsky was an exacting director, who paid great attention to detail, and controlled every movement of his actors. The making of the film took four years.

After *Stalker's* release, Tarkovsky left the Soviet Union at the invitation of RAI (Radio Televisione Italiana) to film *Nostalgia*. He was never to return; his passport was removed

by the Kremlin and he became an exile. The Strugatsky brothers found it difficult to find a publisher, and Kaidanovsky received no more parts from Russian film studios. But he was invited by the Poles to Warsaw, where he was greeted as a hero and offered a role in a film, *The Interrogation of Pilot Perks*.

In 1980 Kaidanovsky returned to Moscow and, avoiding publicity, was offered some small parts. Between 1981 and 1991 he acted in two dozen more films, but never repeated his earlier success. He turned to directing films, the most interesting of which was *Just Death* (1993), about the death of Leo Tolstoy. In November he finished filming in Alexander Khar's *The Train Arrives*, which is dedicated to the centenary of Russian cinema.

Jeanne Vronskaya

Alexander Leonidovich Kaidanovsky, actor, director; born Moscow 23 June 1946; died Moscow 2 December 1995.

Trainer to Buster Mathis Jr and Snr, Mark Breland, Junior Jones and Tom Johnson. Heimer Müller, playwright and director, died Berlin 30 December, aged 66. German socialist playwright. Artistic director of the Berliner Ensemble theatre company since 1992. [An obituary follows.]

Stefan Vajda

Stefan Vajda was one of the leading figures in the field of mathematics known as Operational Research which emerged just after the Second World War. Operational Research grew from wartime attempts to solve problems of minimising costs of production, supply and transportation. It was a period of transition in a long career during which Vajda never lost his enthusiasm for mathematical ideas or failed to encourage others to explore them.

When the war ended, he was pleased to be one of the first new British citizens, just before taking over as Head of the Mathematics group at the Admiralty. He enjoyed contacts at this time with statisticians in Cambridge including David Cox and Henry Daniels, later a colleague at Birmingham University. Another young mathematician, Martin Beale, agreed to join the Admiralty, but only

when he had first completed a book on bridge.

An optimisation technique called Linear Programming was then developing in the United States. This had wide applications in industry and both Vajda and Beale became interested. They developed it further in Britain and, later, it became the subject of Vajda's first book, *Linear Programming*, published in 1956, which was translated into many languages. Since the technique was central to the growth of Operational Research as a separate discipline, the book established his international reputation. He enjoyed writing about the mathematical problems, and in all produced 15 books on subjects ranging from manpower planning to mathematical games.

Stefan Vajda (Steven to his younger friends) was born in Budapest in 1901 and moved with his family to Vienna in

1903, where he was educated. He first entered university as an engineering student, but switched to actuarial training. When he qualified, but could not find work, he turned to mathematics for a PhD. Later, he attended lectures by David Hilbert and other leading mathematicians in Göttingen, including Emmy Noether who provided a contact in insurance. This led to Vajda's first job as a consultant in Romania and then to what must have seemed a more secure position as an actuary in Vienna, where he was married in 1929.

It is difficult to imagine the anxiety and hazards of escape from Austria in 1939; Vajda's two children were sent first to Sweden and his wife Eva was admitted to the United Kingdom as a domestic servant. Vajda only obtained a visa because his friend Karl Popper, the philosopher, had offered him a

job in New Zealand. In fact, he never went there because war was declared and the family were reunited in England.

At the outbreak of war, the family had a short period of internment on the Isle of Man with many other refugees from Europe. Internment on the Isle of Man was not an unpleasant experience. Vajda spent some of his time teaching mathematics; one of his pupils was Claus Moser. In effect, a college was formed, and several students passed entrance examinations for London University. After a few months, however, most of them were released. Vajda found work with an insurance company in Epsom.

Before the war ended he was involved in mathematical research for the Admiralty - which led to Operational Research. His association with the Admiralty had begun early in 1944 after an actuary, Hilary



Vajda: 'enemy alien'

Seal, invited him to join a new Statistics section there. Vajda's reaction was to ask how an "enemy alien" could possibly work for the Ministry of Defence.

He worked for the Admiralty until 1965 when, aged 63, he became the first Professor of Operational Research at Birmingham University. He set up a

group in the Engineering Production Department and I first met him when I was invited to give a seminar. He continued research there after formal retirement until 1973, when he was invited to move to Sussex University by Pat Rivett. Since then, he had worked enthusiastically as a teacher and supervisor of research projects in both Operational Research and Statistics groups. His penetrating questions were a regular feature of our seminars.

John Bather

Stefan Vajda, actuary and mathematician; born Budapest 20 August 1901; Head of Mathematics, Birmingham University 1952-65; Professor of Operational Research 1965-68; Senior Research Fellow 1968-73; Visiting Professor, Sussex University 1973-95; married 1929 (one son, one daughter); died Brighton 10 December 1995.

CASE SUMMARIES

1 January 1996

The following notes of judgments were prepared by the reporters of the *All England Law Reports*.

Companies
Practice Direction No 2 of 1995: Directors' Disqualification: ChD Ct Ct (Sir Richard Seaton V-C) 14 Dec 1995.

The overall effect of this new practice direction would be to give the court greater control over the conduct of disqualification proceedings, so as to enable it to deal with them as expeditiously as possible.

Drink-driving
Webster v DPP, QB Div Ct (Schiemann LJ, Holland J) 4 Dec 1995.
Once a police officer had lawfully set in train the procedure, under s 91(a) of the Road Traffic Act 1988, for requiring a specimen of blood from a person taken into hospital after a road accident, that requirement remained valid after the

person had been discharged, had been arrested under s 6(5)(b) of the Act and the procedure continued at the police station, since the locus at which the specimen was provided was not vital.

Keith Hadzili (Kidd MacLavery & Co) for the appellant; John McGuinness (CPS) for the respondent.

Natural justice
R v Ealing Magistrates' Court, ex p Panerum; QB Div Ct (Staughton LJ, Roush J) 22 Nov 1995.

The failure to notify a dog's owner of proceedings in the magistrates' court against a third party, which proceedings resulted in a destruction order being made under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, constituted a breach of natural justice. Even though it was probable that nothing the owner could have said would have

Born into wealth, which she rejected, a member of the Labour Party, Communist Party and Cheshire County Council, a Quaker, a fighter against racism and for social justice and equality, especially for women, a philanthropist with a shrewd business brain, a national benefactor of applied plant biology and horticultural research - Lois Bulley was an exceptional human being.

Her socialist, agnostic father, Arthur Bulley, was a pioneer Fabian and a successful Liverpool cotton broker. He used his wealth to become perhaps the most important patron of British plant collecting this century, creating at Ness in the Wirral a garden which holds today one of the finest plant collections in the British Isles.

Her mother, Agnes, an equally committed socialist, was a devout Anglican whose marriage worked happily in spite of the religious difference. Both Lois and her brother Alfred, however, were deeply affected by these contradictions. Brought up as agnostics so they could choose their own religion when old enough, they spent their early childhood cloistered at Ness in a household of older people, and rarely mixed with other children. They were taught by French and German governesses, which gave Lois a German accent which lasted all her life. Overawed by her upbringing and later by boarding school, she was left with permanent difficulty in establishing personal relationships.

The conscience and passionate integrity passed on by her parents troubled Lois Bulley. She felt she had no right to her inherited wealth, but owed a debt to the society which gave it to her. This was her morality and her motivation, which she pursued through charitable and political work.

Charitable action began in the late 1920s with a trust to help the children of poor families achieve a full-scale private education. Political action was nourished by work in the East End of London, where Bulley applied an early training in midwifery and Truby King nutrition. She briefly joined the British Women's Total Abstinence Union; though she rejected its narrow evangelism she remained a lifelong teetotaler.

Joining the Labour Party in 1930, Bulley won a seat on Neston Urban District Council, where she championed low-paid railwaymen. In 1934 she became county councillor for Neston, including Ellesmere Port, lost the seat three years later, then won Bebington including New Ferry in 1938. She served as alderman from 1939 until 1946. One of only two socialists and five women on the council, she campaigned on issues of the unemployed, low levels of public assistance, social deprivation and women's and children's rights.

Dressing simply and never one for fine living, Bulley was well-known for her ability to clarify, explain and win understanding. In Tory-dominated Cheshire in the cruel 1930s this made her a public force for the Left. She saw no contradiction in standing as Labour candidate for Chester in the 1935 general election, then joining the Communist Party in 1936 while remaining a Labour Party member. The pro-Franco attitude of the Tory government in Britain towards the Spanish Civil War shocked her. "Only the Communists," she said, "offer an effective opposition."

The Second World War and its aftermath changed Lois Bulley. Still serving on the County Council, she drove ambulances through the Merseyside blitz, then stood against Selwyn Lloyd as Labour candidate for the Wirral in the 1945 election. Although she did well, pushing a powerful Liberal challenge into third place, she lost her seat on the council the following year. Known for her work on behalf of mental health, she was drawn into the new National Health Service, appointed to

Liverpool Regional Hospital Board and the management committees of two hospitals, chairing the board's mental services committee, then the board itself until 1972.

Charitable work replaced political activity as her principal commitment. She began to look beyond Merseyside, especially towards Africa whence came some of her wealth - she often recalled how Liverpool's prosperity was built on the African slave trade. At the same time she experienced a personal conversion to Christianity. Introduced by Labour Party friends to Quakerism and the Society of Friends, she was accepted into membership in 1954.

She travelled to Nigeria to help a Muslim educational trust. In Nairobi in 1956 she established a trust to give back to Africa, she said, the benefit of profits she had inherited through shares in Motor Mart East Africa. Already in 1948 she had given to Liverpool University the great gardens at Ness, the house, the large estate which went with it and an endowment of £75,000. It was the largest bequest the university had received other than its Cohen Library. Yet Bulley refused any university honours.

This was the final disposal of her wealth. Always open to the public as her father would have wished, the Botanic Gardens at Ness are of international distinction. Ness is also the university's environmental and horticultural research station; it continues the work of Arthur Bulley, commemorating his enormous achievements.



Bulley: debt to society

The gift and the end of financial giving brought about a further change in Bulley's life. For more than a decade she had worked closely with Friends, especially with Nancy Kershaw, Warden of the Heswall Friends' Meeting House. In 1970 they formed a partnership. Moving to London for some years, they pursued the cultural life of theatre and music which Bulley had rarely had time to experience. It was a kind of liberation.

They travelled several times to Kenya to her trust in Nairobi. The money was divided between water sewage schemes, later adopted by the government, the management of a mixed-race hospital for children, and a scholarship scheme through the National Council of Churches for Kenya. All three projects flourish today. Bulley insisted the scholarships went exclusively to girls, in this way helping to pioneer women's education in Kenya. She insisted, too, that everything she gave or established be administered by Africans, upsetting white colonial prejudice by mixing with Kenyans on equal terms, going to their homes, eating and travelling with them, rejecting a white superiority which refused to mix or trust.

Sustained for more than 20 years by Nancy Kershaw, Lois Bulley watched from a small house in Tavrin near Chester the success of her ventures. She attended university events in Liverpool and occasions at Ness, relating to the end her agile mind and fund of anecdotes.

Peter Brinson

Agnes Lois Bulley, political activist and philanthropist; born Ness, Cheshire 2 December 1901; died Tavrin, Cheshire 27 December 1995.

• Peter Brinson died 7 April 1995

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

CRAWLEY: Stephen, dearly loved husband, father and grandfather; peacefully at home on 29 December. Funeral at St Alban's Church, Tilford Road, Hindhead, on Tuesday 9 January, 12 noon. No flowers, donations to Maccop.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorials services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2011 or faxed to 0171-293 2018, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line (VAT extra). They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment in white (the Queen's Life Guard in Green Guards, 11am.

Birthdays

Dr Jack Birks, former managing director of BP; 76; Mr Alistair Campbell, rugby player; 36; Lord Colwyn, dental surgeon and jazz trumpeter; 54; Miss Valentina Cortese, actress; 72; Sir James Crane, former Chief Inspector of Constabulary; 75; Mrs Christine Crawley, MER 46; Mr Richard Gibson, actor; 41; Professor Dame June Lloyd, paediatrician; 88; Miss Zena Marshall, actress; 69; Dr James Merriman, former chairman, National Computing Centre; 81; Mr James Moorhouse, MER 72; Colonel Patrick Porteous VC; 78; Lord Kingsland (Sir Christopher Proul, QC), former MEP; 54; Professor Ralph Raphael, organic chemist; 75; Mr Lawrence Rowe, West Indies cricketer; 47; Mr J.D. Salfinger, author; 77; Lord Swansea, marksman; 71.

Anniversaries

Births: Lorenzo de Medici, statesman; 1449; Maria Edgeworth, novelist; 1767; Arthur Hugh Clough, poet; 1819; Sir James George Frazer, anthropologist; 1854; Edward Morgan Forster, novelist; 1879; John Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI; 1895; Harold Adrian Russell "Kim"

Philby, spy; 1912; Joe Orton (John Kingsley Orton), playwright; 1933. Deaths: William Wycherley, playwright; 1716; James Francis Edward Stuart, the Old Pretender; 1766; Johann Christian Bach, composer; 1782; Heinrich Rudolph Hertz, physicist; 1894; Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens, architect; 1944; Maurice Chevalier, entertainer and actor; 1972; Frank Soskice (Lord Stow Hill), statesman; 1979; Hepzibah Meuth, pianist; 1981; Lord David Cecil, author; 1986; Lafayette Ronald Hubbard (L. Ron Hubbard), science-fiction writer and proponent of Scientology; 1986. On this day: the Gregorian calendar was introduced; 1583; Charles II was crowned King of Scots at Scone; 1651; the first issue of the *Daily Universal Register* (later the *Times*) appeared; 1785; the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland came into being; 1801; Haiti declared her independence of France; 1804; the importation of slaves into the United States was forbidden; 1808; Britain proclaimed sovereignty over the Falkland Islands; 1833; London was divided into 10 postal districts; 1858; Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India; 1877; the first postal orders were issued in Great Britain; 1881; the electric chair was adopted in New

York for capital punishment; 1889; in Britain, people of 70 and over became eligible for old age pensions; 1909; labour exchanges came into operation; 1910; the British telephone service passed into the control of the state; 1912; the Soviet Union was established; 1923; the capital of Norway, known as Christiania, resumed the name of Oslo; 1925; a nationalist government was set up in China; 1926; coal mines in Britain were nationalised; 1947; British railways were nationalised; 1948; Sudan became an independent democratic republic; 1956; the European Economic Community came into being; 1958; the Cameroons became independent; 1960; Western Samoa became independent; 1962; the Foreign and Commonwealth offices were amalgamated to form the Diplomatic Service; 1965; Great Britain, the Irish Republic and Denmark joined the EEC; 1973; UK fishing limits were extended to 200 miles around the British coast; 1977; Today is New Year's Day and the Feast Day of St Almachius or Tricamus, St Clarus, St Concordius of Spoleto, St Eudogius or Oyend, St Euphrasine, St Felix of Bourges, St Fulgentius of Ruspe, St Mochus or Cuau, St Odilo, St Peter of Abroa and St William of Saint Benignus.

The following notes of judgments were prepared by the reporters of the *All England Law Reports*.

Companies
Practice Direction No 2 of 1995: Directors' Disqualification: ChD Ct Ct (Sir Richard Seaton V-C) 14 Dec 1995.

The overall effect of this new practice direction would be to give the court greater control over the conduct of disqualification proceedings, so as to enable it to deal with them as expeditiously as possible.

Drink-driving
Webster v DPP, QB Div Ct (Schiemann LJ, Holland J) 4 Dec 1995.
Once a police officer had lawfully set in train the procedure, under s 91(a) of the Road Traffic Act 1988, for requiring a specimen of blood from a person taken into hospital after a road accident, that requirement remained valid after the

CASE SUMMARIES

1 January 1996

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person had been discharged, had been arrested under s 6(5)(b) of the Act and the procedure continued at the police station, since the locus at which the specimen was provided was not vital.

Keith Hadzili (Kidd MacLavery & Co) for the appellant; John McGuinness (CPS) for the respondent.

Natural justice
R v Ealing Magistrates' Court, ex p Panerum; QB Div Ct (Staughton LJ, Roush J) 22 Nov 1995.

The failure to notify a dog's owner of proceedings in the magistrates' court against a third party, which proceedings resulted in a destruction order being made under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, constituted a breach of natural justice. Even though it was probable that nothing the owner could have said would have

prevented the order being made, the court would have to think long and hard before upholding a decision where the rules of natural justice had been breached, since down that slippery slope lay the way to dictatorship.

Sandy Canavan (Sharratts, Carterbury) for the applicant; Stephen John (Special Casework Unit) for the respondent.

Practice
Unicargo v Flotes Maritime S de RL & snt; QB Adm Ct (Clarke J) 16 Nov 1995.

The court had no jurisdiction to give leave to serve the originating summons out of the jurisdiction under RSC Ord 73 r 7 where the defendants were not parties to any arbitration agreement with the plaintiff and the plaintiff had no other cause of action against them.

Accordingly the order, which had provided that the owners of the chartered vessel were to allow the plaintiff to inspect and survey the vessel, had to be discharged.

Simon Kvernadal (Barlow Lyde & Gilbert) for the plaintiffs; David Bailey (Norton Rose) for the defendants.

Rating

R v Birmingham City Council, ex p Mushaq; QB (Dyson J) 11 Dec 1995.

The council was entitled to request a solicitor, who was setting up in business as a sole practitioner, for details of her personal assets before deciding whether she was suffering hardship such as would bring her within the provisions of s 49(2) of the Local Government and Finance Act 1988, and thus to entitle her to a reduction in her non-domestic rates. *Christopher Gibbons (Mushaq & Co, Birmingham) for the applicant; Tobias Davey (Birmingham City Council) for the respondent.*

The global year at a glance

A presidential election, economic downturn, peace in the balance – and a European fracas guaranteed ... The Independent's specialists pinpoint movers, shakers and moments to watch for

A quiet sort of boom

For the world economy 1996 will be a year of insecurity. Growth is slowing everywhere. Is this just a pause in what for most of the world has been a solid economic recovery, or is renewed recession round the corner?

It ought to be a pause, for it is quite normal in the middle of the growth phase of the economic cycle for things to falter, then pick up. Exactly this happened in the mid-Eighties. But what gives a twist this time is that different countries are at different stages of the economic cycle. The US recovery has been running along now for more than four years, while in Japan recovery has hardly begun. Yet all these economies show the same symptoms: confidence, whether in the business communities or among consumers, is in short supply.

For the first half of 1996 at least, expect the "pause" to continue. Expect figures showing that for a few months growth has virtually stopped in the three big economies – the US, Japan and Germany. Expect gloomy profit statements by leaders of large companies, many of which will continue to shed labour. Expect voters everywhere to remain disgruntled, worried, often alarmed.

But expect, too, this period of unease to be met by cuts in interest rates: in the US, certainly in Germany (and elsewhere on the Continent), almost certainly in the UK. For the flip side of such slower growth is even less pressure on prices. Monetary policy has to be eased to encourage growth, but lower inflation makes it possible to ease policy.

Then comes the test. Will cheaper money revive the world economy? I think it will, but maybe more slowly than most people hope or expect. By the end of 1996 or at least by the early part of 1997, most of the world's main economies should be experiencing new growth, but with even lower inflation than at present. Because of this low inflation, it will not feel like a boom in the Eighties sense. It certainly will not feel like a boom if, by the end of 1996, stock markets have stopped their recent giddy climb and maybe fallen back sharply – as I believe is likely. And because this recovery will feel more sombre, more low key, do not expect this to benefit politicians facing elections, on either side of the Atlantic.

Do not, however, consider this sober mood odd or unusual. This is the new normality: a low level of inflation; a moderate rate of growth; a high sense of job insecurity. We must learn to love it, for it will not go away.

Hamish McRae

No bold step for Europe

In Brussels, 1996 has been eagerly awaited for five years. Europe decided when it signed the Maastricht treaty that this would be another of its periodic dates with destiny, when it took another bold step towards federalism. Now, however, it is looking rather less of a milestone.

The reasons why it was thought necessary to hold another Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) in 1996 were threefold. There were deals that did not come to fruition in 1991, which it was thought might look more feasible with five years' experience. The onset of monetary union – tentatively set for 1997 – seemed likely to make further reform desirable. And enlargement to central Europe, made possible by the upheavals of 1989, was bound to make change a necessary precondition of new negotiations.

None of this seems quite as possible, desirable or necessary now. Enlargement looks to be several years ahead; monetary union has been put off until 1999; and the appetite for change has been dulled by the

dreadful process of ratifying Maastricht. The IGC will not be as ambitious as the 1991 architects had hoped.

But while the ceiling may have come lower, it has not come as low as Britain would like. Three areas of conflict are likely to dominate. First, defence: most other states want to create a European security body that will evolve into a common European defence organisation. Britain's goal is much more modest: to create a European pillar for Nato and tighten co-ordination within the EU. London will probably emerge on the winning side of this debate.

Not so on political reform. Most states want to make more decisions by qualified majority voting, despite Britain having said it would resist this. The European Parliament, too, will probably have a little more influence.

The third area of dispute will be unemployment. There will be strong pressure from some quarters for a more effective EU stance, but the number of different recipes – trade restrictions, higher EU spending and tougher social legislation – make the outcome unpredictable.

Since 1991, British officials have confidently predicted that this IGC would be more of a pit-stop than a chance to re-engineer the European vehicle. They have been proved partly right. But a commitment to more reform will be an essential element of any package agreed this year or (more likely) next – and there is the rub. The signature on the treaty that comes out of this year's negotiations may be either J Major or T Blair. A treaty signed by Mr Blair could well be much more to the liking of the other Europeans, though Labour's thinking on the EU remains opaque. That is why the French and German governments must be anxiously scanning the British papers for the next 12 months – especially the obituaries pages.

Andrew Marshall

When Deng departs

Strained relations with the West, particularly the US, will dominate China's start to 1996. Peking's foreign policy is taking on an increasingly nationalistic tone, and the military top brass are believed to be behind China's aggressive stance against foreign "interference", whether over human rights or continuing nuclear tests.

February is the first anniversary of Peking's pledge to Washington to stamp out intellectual property piracy, and US trade officials will have to decide whether China's failure to honour the agreement warrants retaliation. The following month, the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva may for the first time pass a motion against China in the wake of the 14-year jail sentence on the leading dissident Wei Jingsheng.

On the trade front, a sweeping package of import tariff reductions is due to come into effect on 1 April, but China's negotiations to join the World Trade Organisation are likely to remain bogged down in worsening Sino-US relations.

The Lunar New Year in mid-February heralds the Year of the Rat, which is supposed to bring prosperity. As in the past three years, however, domestic politics will be overshadowed by the failing health of Deng Xiaoping, 92 in August. No one imagined the patriarch would last this long, thereby postponing the expected leadership struggle.

For the leadership in Peking, by far the most important event in this year's diary is the first fully democratic presidential election in Taiwan, also in March. China's military manoeuvres off the south-east coast are likely to resume in the new year, and Taiwan will feel the heat as Peking does its best to undermine support for the leading candidate, President Lee Teng-hui. All this will heighten Hong Kong's fears, with only 18 months to go before China reclaims sovereignty.

For those watching the Chinese economy, this year's National People's Congress – probably in March or April – will finally agree the much-debated Ninth Five-Year Plan (1996-2000). Although central planning went out of fashion more than a decade ago, the government will confirm that its priority remains the fight against inflation. As the economy cools to less than double-digit growth, the focus will be on those left behind by economic reform: the underemployed rural workforce and staff at loss-making state enterprises. With the emphasis on social stability ahead of Deng's death, the crackdown on crime will continue – using public execution as the favoured deterrent.

Uncertainty over Deng's departure clouds many people's view of China's immediate future, despite its buoyant economy. At dinner tables the forecast for 1996 is "jishen, leguan" – cautious but optimistic.

Teresa Poole

A president for Palestine

Barring assassination, Yasser Arafat will win the Palestinian elections on 20 January. He will declare himself president of Palestine – but exactly what that means will not be so clear-cut as his victory at the polls. "Final status" talks, to begin in May, will not cede east Jerusalem as a Palestinian capital nor bring about the withdrawal of 120,000 Jewish settlers from Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza.

More important will be the status of Syrian-Israeli peace talks. Now undergoing another bout of Israeli-inspired optimism, they could turn dangerous. President Assad's insistence on a total Israeli withdrawal from Golan – under the terms of UN resolutions he accepted as the basis of the 1991 peace talks – will be portrayed by Israel and its US State Department supporters in 1996 as the "obstacle to peace".

So if there is no speedy progress in the talks, Syria will be blamed, rather than Israel, whose unwillingness to withdraw from all Syrian land will not be regarded as an "obstacle to peace". King Hussein of Jordan and Arafat were the only Arab leaders to embrace Saddam Hussein after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait – and this week enough after the US-Iraqi war to make peace with Israel, Syria, which did not embrace Saddam, is too strong. A movement will therefore grow to render it weak enough to make peace: this may be done through economic or political isolation, or by Israeli military action against Syria in Lebanon, which Syria controls with 20,000 troops.

Lebanon will continue to recover from its 15-year war; from today, Beirut has been promised 24-hour electricity for the first time in 20 years. President Mubarak of Egypt – another man who fears assassination – can expect another year of "Islamicist" attacks on his regime. In Algeria, if President Zeroul keeps his promise of parliamentary elections, the "Islamicists" may have a chance of proving their popularity again at the polls. But the throat-cuttings and car bombs will continue.

King Fahd's weak heart will remain the focal point of Saudi politics in 1996 – if he dies, there will be a fierce struggle for royal succession in this highly unde-

Saddam. For five years, those proclaiming his imminent downfall have been wrong – so they might spare us their predictions in 1996. But I doubt they will.

Robert Fisk

Defections, elections

So this year could bring a Sgeneral election after all. The acturaries say two Conservative MPs are likely to die by July, enough to wipe out John Major's majority, even assuming Sir Richard Body, whose name once evoked the "flapping of white coats" to the Prime Minister's ears, remains loyal.

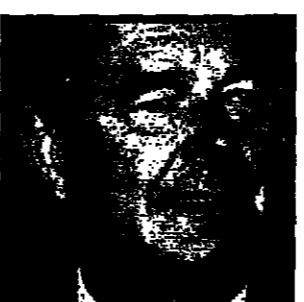
What the acturaries cannot tell us is how many more Tory MPs harbour secret thoughts of defection. But Emma Nicholson's sensational step across the floor of the House makes clear that nothing very specific has to happen to provoke a defection. She was, after all, an MP throughout the Thatcher years and, despite Labour propaganda and the "lurch to the right", no one seriously pretends Major is more right-wing than his predecessor.

Even if there are no further defections, one thing is certain: by the end of this year people will know who David Trimble is. More than anyone else, the new leader of the Ulster Unionists, who once said that were he a mainland politician he would

Constitutional reform looks particularly vulnerable. Mandelson raised the question of whether Scotland should still be over-represented at Westminster if it has its own parliament. Other questions crowd in. Why shouldn't there be a referendum in Scotland and Wales to set up assemblies? Will there really be regional assemblies in the North and in London but not in the rest of England? What would Labour actually do about a "fairer" voting system for Westminster elections?

These are the sorts of questions Labour will have to answer in 1996, whether or not there is an election.

John Rentoul



Big spenders? Little chance

The British economy will trot along in 1996, forcing its rider, Kenneth Clarke, to cut interest rates to 6 per cent by mid-year and maybe as low as 5.75 per cent by the end of the year. There will be no return of the feel-good factor, but increased consumer spending will keep the economy growing, though at a disappointing rate of little more than 2 per cent. Inflation will continue to surprise by coming in below expectations.

One forecaster takes an altogether rosier view of the prospects for 1996: the Chancellor. Even though Mr Clarke cut interest rates in mid-December by a quarter point, to 6.5 per cent, the Treasury's official forecast of 3 per cent growth in 1996 is not based on rate cuts. Instead, it is based on a rip-roaring – by the standards of the Nineties – 3.5 per cent increase in real consumer expenditure.

Once again, the Tory party is expecting consumers to do their duty and spend, spend, spend the economy into sustaining the recovery. In the Eighties, the Government worried about consumers' unbridled capacity to borrow. Now the hope is that we will all dip into savings to spend more. Together with rising real incomes and tax cuts, this lies behind the forecast for consumer spending.

Other economists, including those at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, take a more pessimistic view. They argue that continuing job insecurity and high indebtedness will make consumers cautious and lead them to maintain relatively high savings. The OECD is predicting growth in consumer spending of little more than 2 per cent.

However, the big threat to economic growth in the short-term comes from another direction. In the past few months, retailers and manufacturers have been building up stocks, even though domestic and foreign demand has been much lower than anticipated. This has had the effect of flattering growth this year. The fear is that companies will now satisfy orders from these bloated inventories, rather than by increasing production and employing more people.

Concern that the economy is about to undergo such a sharp "inventory correction" led one leading City forecaster, Goldman Sachs, to slash its growth forecast for 1996 to 1.7 per cent.

Another danger to the economy is a collapse in demand from our main trading partners in Europe. Both the German and French economies have stalled, and the outlook for 1996 looks bleak, with growth likely to be as low as 1.5 per cent. The flip side to all this gloom

– and the pretext for further interest rate cuts – is that the outlook for inflation looks distinctly promising. Powerful global disinflationary forces will continue in 1996. The Government's objective of underlying inflation below 2.5 per cent by the end of the Parliament looks surprisingly attainable.

Paul Wallace



Keeping the peace alive

Northern Ireland in 1996 will experience either the continuing benefits of peace or the catastrophe of a new outbreak of violence. The peace process still exists and has widespread support, but the signs of strain within it are looking decidedly ominous and no one can be completely confident that it will last.

Compared with other conflicts in areas such as the Middle East and South Africa, the Irish peace process has proved remarkably resilient and effective, but the IRA has lately taken to killing drug dealers, and the fear is that this resort to the use of the gun could be the start of a gradual unravelling. If this does happen, it will be because Sinn Féin and the IRA conclude that the British government has no intention of including them in negotiations for an eventual political settlement. This could happen at the leadership level of the organisations, or lower down in the ranks, activists deciding the process is a waste of time.

Whether or not this happens could become clear early in the year, for everything hinges on the issue of weapons decommissioning, and the international body examining this question is due to report in the middle of January.

If the log-jam is broken, moves towards all-party talks could happen quite quickly, opening a new phase of negotiation. Like everything else in Northern Ireland, this would not be an easy phase or a short one, for hammering out a settlement acceptable to republi-



cans and loyalists is likely to take years, not months.

A breakdown of the IRA ceasefire opens up an appalling vista of a full-scale reversion to the gun and the bomb, with the IRA turning its back on politics. The result would be futile and nihilistic violence. The republicans would, in effect, be abandoning all thought of political influence and instead sinking all on a military victory.

If that happens, there will be a new wave of security responses. There may also be attempts to start inter-party talks without Sinn Féin, but in the poisonous atmosphere that renewed violence would bring the chances of success for these would be remote. Even the most stringent security measures would take some years to wear down the IRA, as well as coping with the almost inevitable resurgence of violent loyalist reaction. In the process many people would die, the increased bitterness further retarding the chances of political progress. It is a scenario that illustrates why so many fervently hope the present peace can be kept alive.

David McKitterick

Olympics and OJ, part II

Washington's political professionals will be consumed in 1996 by the business of the presidential election, but even fewer Americans than usual will be paying much attention. General Colin Powell's decision not to run denied the drama romance: Newt Gingrich's non-candidacy denied it comedy. Barring a late entry by Clint Eastwood, it looks as if the ageing Bob Dole will be the Republican to take on Bill Clinton on 5 November. With the TV networks already signalling that they mean to devote fewer



hours to campaign coverage than in the past, the betting is that voter turn-out will slip below the 50 per cent mark.

Of greater potential interest will be the outcome of the congressional ethics probes to which Clinton and "1995 Man of the Year" Gingrich will continue to be subjected. The president's Whitewater land deals when he was governor of Arkansas have generated frothy excitement among fringe Republicans convinced they are about to witness a Democratic president fall in spectacular Watergate style. The appearance of a compromising document or two could still hand Dole the presidency but in Clinton's favour is the byzantine complexity of the affair, which renders it all but impossible for ABC news to explain in less than a minute and 15 seconds.

Gingrich, for his part, is held in such low esteem by the public at large that it would come less as a surprise and more as a confirmation of a prejudice should it be found that he fiddled the tax books to promote his political career. When Gingrich assumed his role as Speaker of the House of Representatives in January 1995, he seemed to imagine he was possessed of the authority of Fidel Castro in January 1959 to transform the state in the manner he saw fit, to restore to individuals the power over their lives that "reactionary liberal" government had supposedly usurped. But the checks and balances built into the constitution, laborious check to tyranny that they are, brought his train to a halt at the end of 1995.

Of greater concern than all of the above to ordinary spectators of the American scene will be the outcome of the trial due in May of Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, the men accused of planting the Oklahoma City bomb; OJ Part Two, when Simpson defends himself against a civil suit brought by the relatives of the two victims a Los Angeles jury said he did not kill; the Olympic Games in Atlanta, and other games such as baseball, football and basketball, but not soccer – which will almost certainly fail in yet another planned attempt to form a successful professional league.

John Carlin

Terry Tarot gives away fortune. Live on TV.

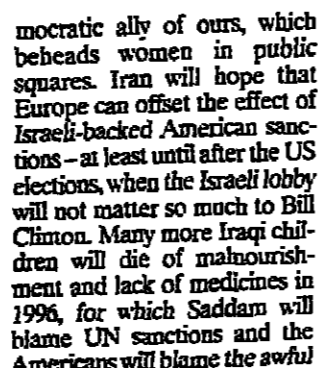
TERRY TAROT

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What will 1996 bring for (from bottom left): Bill Clinton, Bob Dole, Deng Xiaoping, the stock market, house sales, Helmut Kohl, Hong Kong, Jacques Chirac, unemployment, John Major, President Assad of Syria, Shimon Peres, Yasser Arafat and Tony Blair?

INDEPENDENT

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Counting the cost of defection

Emma Nicholson's defection, at least in the short term, is bad news for more than just the Government. For John Major, coming after Alan Howarth's departure to Labour, it is a shattering blow. In modern times, the Conservatives have lost the odd MP to the Opposition – some who became independents, and more recently Christopher Brocklebank-Fowler, to the SDP in the early Eighties. But two MPs from government in three months, one apiece to the main opposition parties, sets an unenviable record for modern Conservatism.

Inevitably it will help to bring to a head the fears of the remaining One Nation and pro-European Tories in Mr Major's ranks, who have become increasingly disillusioned at the Conservatives' rightward and anti-European drift. Despite their claims to have a majority in the parliamentary party they have proved themselves unable to modify the Government's isolationism in Europe and its harsher rhetoric and policies at home. Now more will have to decide whether to stay and fight, or abandon a Conservative Party which if it loses the next election looks set for a battle that could come to match the internal divisions that Labour faced in the early Eighties.

But if it is bad news for the Conservatives, it is bad news too for the governance of the country. Mr Major's majority is now down to five, and is likely to fall to three after the two pending by-elections. It will take only another couple of defections – or, more probably, the likely death of a couple more Conservative MPs – for the Prime Minister, on recent by-election form, to be heading

for a minority government later this year and all the special trading with special interest groups that this is likely to imply.

The Prime Minister will be increasingly reliant on Ulster Unionist votes or abstentions to carry his business – a prospect which will threaten the one undeniable achievement of Mr Major's premiership, the Ulster peace process. An already weak government is set to become even weaker, with the Prime Minister having to tack ever more frequently, first to his party's left and then to its right, in an attempt to hold his government together.

Ms Nicholson's defection may not be unmitigated good news even for the Opposition. Tony Blair has undeniably changed his party's rhetoric and direction (not least by claiming for Labour the One Nation mantle that Ms Nicholson and Mr Howarth believe that the Conservatives have abandoned). But new Labour still has big questions to answer: over future welfare policy; on how, beyond a windfall tax, it will fund its jobs and training programmes; on how it can square its claims to be a party of low taxation with the funding of a modernised welfare state.

Faced by what looks increasingly like disintegration on the Tory benches, Labour may be tempted to put off the hard answers. If that were to happen, Ms Nicholson's defection will have done the Opposition and the country no favours, reducing the chances that when an election does come, the electorate will have on offer a fully coherent alternative to the Conservatives.

Dole vs Clinton: the circus comes to town

Despite three years buffeted by scandal, real or imagined, scarred by personal invective and tarnished by underachievement, Bill Clinton seems the man most likely to win this year's US presidential campaign. (Yes, the circus is here again: it starts in earnest with the Iowa caucuses on 12 February.)

The sour, septuagenarian Senator Robert Dole is overwhelming favourite to become President Clinton's challenger in the autumn. Both Dole and Clinton are fearsome campaigners, but are also notorious for their ability to put one foot in their mouth while shooting themselves in the other. A Dole-Clinton campaign could resemble a self-demolition derby, with Clinton the favourite to collapse across the line first.

But do not place large bets on this campaign. US political forecasting is more than usually foolish at present. The American electorate, once tolerably predictable, has experienced a kind of Gadarene giddiness in the past four years. On the first day of 1992, President George Bush, the victor of the Gulf, looked unassailable. Eleven months later, he was defeated by the young Arkansas governor. This was portrayed as the birth of a new Democratic Party and a return to government activism.

One year and one month ago, President Clinton was humbled by Newt Gingrich's sweeping victory in the congressional mid-term elections. This was hailed as the dawning of a new era of Republican anti-government activism. Thirteen months later, Gingrich is one of the most hated men in American politics (a 29 per cent approval rating); the Democratic Party

wallows, at almost every political level, in leaderless and idea-free disarray.

Clinton's and Gingrich's troubles have been partly of their own making. Both men are products of the electronic age in American politics – self-promoters rather than achievers. But it is also true that both have been savaged by the electorate for attempting to push through the policies that they were elected to enact: Clinton on health care, Gingrich on balancing the US budget. Both have become victims – as well as exponents – of the era of the perpetual political campaign: of vituperative chat shows; of concerted special-interest intimidation; and of negative advertisements full of expertly crafted misrepresentation.

At present, the government of the most powerful nation is "shut down" (because of the budget deficit dispute between Clinton and Gingrich). But this is just an absurd symptom of a wider deadlock. In modern US politics, the weapons for halting government, for preventing anything being agreed, have become more powerful than the official 200-year-old machinery to promote compromise and decision. The US electorate, intermittently following the plot, hurtles from a touching belief in some fresh saviour to a renewed conviction that all politicians are rascals.

Clinton or Dole? Government activism or anti-government activism? Both men are anti-ideological fixers and muddlers, who love the business of politics for its own sake. It is difficult to believe that the US will gain the new hope or direction it craves from either man.

I name this boy Newt. Or possibly Ratko

As regular readers will know, this is the time of year when I bring you the list of the top 10 boys' names of 1995 in order of popularity; based not on the births and christening lists, but on the newspaper headlines, where you get a very different kind of name. To take only two examples, Sting and Madonna are two of the most familiar first names from the past decade, yet they were only found in newspaper headlines, never in the registry office.

To take the boys' names first, I have to reiterate what I have often said before – that it is no short cut to fame to have an ordinary name. When you think of some of the names that have been in and out of the White House this century – Franklin, Dwight, Spiro, Lyndon – you realise that these are names we have never met in real life.

To take a modern example, none of us has ever met someone called Lech, and very few of us can even pronounce it, yet until recently Lech was a household name. Alas, since the recent Polish elections it has become more of a historical memory.

Conversely, common names such as John are a barrier to success. One might say: "Hold on a moment! Is



MILES KINGSTON

not the Prime Minister of Britain named John?" but to that I would say, "No, he is not. He is called Major. That is all he is called. He is never called John in headlines because no one would know who was meant."

In fact, John has been quite a common name in the press this year, but only because of dead people called John, such as the late Sir John Berjeman, whose letters are still appearing, the late John Lennon, whose records are still appearing, and John Redwood, who may be alive physically but seems dead in all other respects.

One of the oddest things about 1995 has been the sudden popularity of boys' names deriving from the former Yugoslavia. Among others which were in or around the top 10 are

Ratko, Stobodan and Radovan, none of which have measured on the scale before.

Another interesting development is the continuing emergence of South African boys' names. We have seen Nelson and FC De in the top 10 before, but this time there are other names such as Chester and Joost to contend with, all drawn from the game of rugby. Indeed, I believe there is a South African rugby player called Hennie, a name not borne by any male or female in Britain.

But enough of this, and straight on to the 1995 top 10 boys' names, as computed from the news headlines. Last year's positions are in brackets.

1. Of (1)
2. Ken (1)
3. Nick (1)
4. Nelson (3)
5. Mister (Darcy) (1)
6. Boris (2)
7. Gerry (9)
8. Yitzhak (1)
9. Yasser (7)
10. Newt (1)

Of is, obviously, drawn from the popular American sportsman who everyone thought had murdered his wife until an American court found

he was not guilty, after which everyone still believed he had murdered his wife.

Ken is an unusually popular name this year, owing to the fame of the late Nigerian writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, but also owing to the presence of half of the variety act of Ken 'n' Emma (now alas disbanded), the first name of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the male partner of Barbie, and so on.

The name Nick owes its high number 3 position to the fame of Nick Leeson. Nick Faldo and another variety team called Anne and Nick. Mister (Darcy) is a new name on the scene, at least for 150 years, the point being that Darcy seemed to have no first name, so everyone called him Mister Darcy, which is as good a first name as any.

The other names are self-explanatory, except Newt, which is American and therefore probably not a real name at all (and the same goes for Gingrich).

Tomorrow we bring you the top 10 girls' names of 1995. Will Divine beat Diana? Will it be Paula or Camilla? Or will Pamela Anderson sweep the board? Find out tomorrow!



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

How not to police the Internet

From Mr Jim Moody

Sir: The attempts by German prosecutors to censor the Internet via CompuServe (report, 30 December) are misguided and dangerous. Quite apart from the effect of their actions impinging on citizens in countries outside Germany, their partially successful pressure in getting CompuServe to drop 300 newsgroups sets a precedent for unrepresentative and irresponsible censorship by the state authorities.

The Internet is not a children's toy and should only ever be used by minors under adult supervision. By forcing this company to boycott certain newsgroups, a state authority has usurped the rights, duties and responsibilities of parents within and without its territory.

While the state authorities everywhere have a duty to uphold their own countries' laws on pedophilia and child pornography, this concern has been utilised to obscure the real issues around freedom of use of the Internet. Despite media huff and puff, the Internet can no more be described as anarchic than the telephone system or the postal service or a bag of apples. It is a communications medium through which individuals talk over, argue, or laugh about what

interests them. It is not a publisher.

Those who post inappropriate material are dealt with expeditiously by their peers, their fellow-users in each news group. And, by all accounts, the anti-pedophile squads of the British police keep a careful watch on what is being posted in some discussions with a view to tracing criminals here, with some success.

Moves to destroy parental guidance and responsibility should be condemned, especially when they lead to infringement of all adults' rights. Technical help for parents already exists: CompuServe is due to bring in a software filter in the near future to allow parents to make the choices that the German authorities have, for the moment, forced upon the company.

Other such filters are already on the market. And of course there is always the old switch. What is unacceptable, and highly undemocratic, is for adults to be refused the right to decide for themselves by state authorities what is best for them.

Yours faithfully
JIM MOODY
Director, Media Watch
London, N22
31 December

Blair must resolve the tartan problem

From Mr M. J. Turner

Sir: Your leader "Tartan Terrors of Mr Blair" (27 December) suggests that one way around the "West Lothian" question would be to ignore it as just another of the British constitution's many contradictions. You defend this view by stating that the English do not seem concerned about the democratic anomalies that devolution would cause.

However, I think not only the English but also the Scots would find this aspect of devolution hard to stomach, for surely the most pertinent point encompassed in the "West Lothian" question is not that the Scottish

MPs can make English policy whereas the English cannot make Scottish policy, but that a Scottish Westminster MP can take decisions affecting (say) the National Curriculum in schools in the South of England, but will have no say over what is taught in schools in his or her own constituency.

The important link between an MP and his or her constituents will loosen when an MP can do little about local problems and is accountable for nothing concerning local issues. It is for this reason that ignoring the problem can be no option for Mr Blair.

Yours faithfully
MATTHEW J. TURNER
St. Ives, Cambridgeshire
30 December

Symbolism in decommissioning of IRA arms

From Mr John Doherty

Sir: George Huxley (letter, 28 December) got it wrong. It matters not a whit that the preliminary decommissioning of some or all IRA weapons was not, in fact, a precondition set out in the Downing Street Declaration. It matters even less that the decommissioning issue was, as Professor Huxley takes pains to emphasise, dragged in later as a sop to Ulster Unionists.

The issue is not how the decommissioning issue came to dominate the agenda. That perspective reeks of the very sectarianism the so-called peace process labours to overcome, each side digging in along lines of entrenched prejudice while labouring to extract whatever propaganda and tactical advantage is to be had.

Indeed, both sides already seem bogged down in issues thrown up, not so much by the enforced political division of Ireland in 1921, but by the latent sectarian hatreds virulent in the North and the South since the Reformation.

The real question is why the decommissioning football threatens to blow up in everybody's face. The answer: two Christian sects forever at deadly enmity. Indeed, the row over decommissioning can be seen as a symptom of the underlying sectarian pathology. If the cause did not exist, neither would the symptom.

Take the medical analogy a step further and look at the so-called peace process as a symptom in its own right.

The detached perspective recognises the futility of wilfully creating a new symptom in the vain hope that, by tormenting it with one-sided assertions, such as those put about by Professor Huxley, the related – and potentially lethal – symptoms will magically disappear.

They will not.
Yours sincerely
JOHN DOHERTY
Cult Research International
London N8
28 December

Self-gratification at Christmas

From Mr Mark Walmsley

Sir: Your leading article "Even a Pagan Christmas is a chance to dream" (23 December) suggests that, for all its hypocrisy, the festival remains a net gain as a social institution. But you had to omit certain negative aspects of the "goodwill" element in order to arrive at this judgement.

The media emphasis upon idealised Christmas family units can be hugely saddening for those who, for whatever reason, do not share them, and it places great emotional stress on many who do, as indicated by increases in drug overdoses, hotline calls, domestic quarrels, and alcoholics losing their self-discipline. Also, every aspect of environmentalism that one can think of is adversely affected by an increase in consumerism, congestion, and meat consumption.

And – of most relevance to your contention – the greatest part of the spending and giving of, often, frivolous luxury gifts is concentrated within the family or the same social class. This drain on resources, (with long-term effects – January is the peak month for credit-card delinquency) actually reduces our capacity to act on our decent impulses to assist those in need. Inequalities in the status quo are

thus reinforced, particularly that suffered by the "woman who makes Nike shoes on a poverty wage".

The notion of sacrifice is in opposition to the overall modern Christmas ethos. Those who claim that "goodwill" is increased at Christmas should consider the implications of what is mostly a matter of self-gratification and an excuse for irresponsibility.

Yours faithfully
MARK WALMSLEY
Basford, Staffordshire
22 December

From Mr David Warden

Sir: Mary Kenny alleges that: Christmas is a rotten time to be an atheist; but then atheists embrace such a bleak view of life (in my experience) that perhaps they do not care for the "sentimentality" of Christmas anyhow. ("Meanings of Christmas", 28 December).

I confess that, as an ex-Christian, I miss out on the enchantment of Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve; but this is just a trick of candlelight, choristers and the smell of ancient stones. In the cold light of day, Christianity preaches an accused ethic of self-denial (see John 12.24) of which I, for one, am overjoyed to be free.

Yours faithfully
DAVID WARDEN
Bournemouth, Dorset
28 December

From Mr Eoin O'Neachtain

Sir: Your leading article ("Justice from a barrel of a gun", 29 December) is fundamentally flawed, both in its analysis and in its prescription.

Since August 1994 we have not had a cessation of political violence by Sinn Féin/IRA. Instead, we have had a cessation of military operations. Punishment beatings have continued on an even more intense level, as documented by Families Against

Intimidation and Terror, and now we have a dramatic increase in political murders.

For a settlement in Northern Ireland to be truly inclusive, all sides must show their commitment to democratic politics and the rule of law. Sinn Féin/IRA has yet to do this, as do the loyalist paramilitaries.

In this context, the British government's insistence that some decommissioning of weapons by paramilitaries take place seems a minimum requirement for all-party talks. This condition is justified on practical grounds and is in accordance with liberal democratic principles. Opinion in the Republic of Ireland overwhelmingly supports this position (76 per cent of those questioned in a recent poll).

Pressure must now be put on Sinn Féin to condemn unequivocally the murders of recent days and the continuing punishment beatings and demonstrate their adherence to due process. If they do not do this, the genuineness of their commitment to the search for peace in Northern Ireland will have to be seriously re-examined.

Yours etc,
EOIN O'NEACHTAIN
London, W12
29 December

From Mr Robert Cook

Sir: It is interesting to compare Emma Nicholson's comments on changes in the party she now leaves with those of her great-grandfather, William Nicholson, Liberal MP for Petersfield, who left that party to join the Conservatives at the election of 1885.

He then observed that the Liberal party was not solid and united as it had been 30 years before, but was simply a remnant of Whigs and radicals with no bond of union between them (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 7 November 1885).

It will also be interesting to see whether Ms Nicholson modifies her policy, as the UK Conservative Parliamentary Patron of the United Nations Year for Tolerance, of refusing to endorse its declaration because of its coverage of sexual orientation. This was supported by her fellow Liberal Democrat and Labour patrons.

Yours faithfully
ROBERT COOK
London, W11
30 November

From Mr C. G. Passmore

Sir: Why is it that when a politician changes parties it is called defection, but when a politician changes religion it is known as conversion?

Yours faithfully
CHRISTOPHER PASSMORE
Weldon, Northamptonshire
31 December

From Mr Ian Partridge

Sir: Ken Wright seeks to impress with the Royal Mail's statistics and aims (letter, 30 December). As a Lincolnshire resident for 20 years, I have but one question: What is this mythical (or even fictional) beast called a "second delivery"? I know it not!

Yours hopefully,
IAN S. PARTRIDGE
East Barkwith,
Lincolnshire
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Intimidation and Terror, and now we have a dramatic increase in political murders.

Is it just Emma – or is it really The End?

Disaster or comedy? The crack that leads to the crash of the Tory administration, or the squeak of a disappointed and lonely backbencher? Emma Nicholson's defection brought down almost biblical wrath from the party hierarchy, they have accused her of inconsistency, caprice, wounded vanity. She accused them of racism and general beastliness.

Well, she has been inconsistent (but so are most of the Cabinet). And she is composed of personal ambition and vanity, alongside public-spiritedness and idealism (they, too.) Both fleeing woman and fled-from party abhorrence the other as extraordinary, untrustworthy and bizarre. Sensible observers will not doubt be mildly amused by the raised and raucous voices breaking through the new year atmosphere and wonder only whether it means an early election. Is it just Emma or is it The End?

The Government's majority, on paper, is now five. I include the whipless Sir Richard Body, who has promised to back John Major in any confidence motion – rather decently, one thinks, since he is openly

regarded by the Prime Minister as a loony.

Assuming the Government loses its two by-elections, that falls to three – the same as Harold Wilson in 1965-66 and three more than James Callaghan inherited in 1976. Given that both stayed in office, with Wilson completing 64 government Bills in his first parliamentary session before going on to win the 1966 election and Callaghan stomping on for nearly three years with the help of the Lib-Lab pact, that might not seem so bad.

This time, though, the Government seems wrinkled and tired, not young like Labour in the mid-Sixties. And it has no Liberal support waiting in the wings, only the Ulster Unionists. They are unenthusiastic about Major, yet seem unwilling to strike him down. This kind of support is fraught with danger. The Unionists have left open the possibility of a sudden change of mind, which could happen on almost any issue at almost any time. David Trimble and Mo Mowlam, Labour's Northern Ireland frontbencher, become even more important players than before. The greatest political

danger is to the peace process itself, since Major's parliamentary weakness will further inflame nationalist suspicions. But the Unionist bloc now becomes vital to the politics of the year ahead.

Courtesy of Trimble, the Conservatives could still go the whole way to spring 1997. Throughout the Maastricht rebellion, Major's real majority was, on a series of important issues, even lower than it is this morning.

To state that, though, is only to begin the reckoning. For the hidden cause of the two centre-left defections from the Tory party in recent months derives from the Prime Minister's handling of the rebellion then. The rebels behaved with such nerve and discipline that Major decided he had to focus all his attention on the right – placating, haranguing, charming and eventually confronting them, while taking the Tory left for granted.

He calculated that the Conservatives were moving remorselessly rightwards; his own speeches at times reflected this drift (it has never been a lurch), and his own position on European integration



ANDREW MARR

hardened. Pro-European ministers and backbenchers flamed and spoke privately of their despair. But for a time nothing happened.

What Major may have forgotten is that while the Tory right was virtually obliged to maximise its influence by forming cabals within the party (for they have nowhere else to go), the Tory left was starting to see an alternative politics opening up. In a parallel way, after the Callaghan years the Labour left plotted and caballed inside the party (for they had nowhere else to go) while the Labour centre-right broke away to form the SDP.

In recent years we have become used to the allure of the moderate, pro-European, reformist agenda of Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown for

former Tory voters and activists. But Tory politicians have eyes to see and ears to hear, just like their followers. Neither Nicholson nor Alan Howarth were typical Conservative MPs. Their social consciences were worryingly overdeveloped, unfashionably serious and occasionally a mild embarrassment. But if the Conservative Party really does move to a mix of anti-Europeanism and New Gingrich-style radicalism – "A Little England and Smaller State" – then such people may be outsiders for a bigger shift.

Am I predicting a Christian Democrat breakaway to mimic the SDP? No, history never quite repeats itself. The SDP happened to a shattered party in opposition, whose ideologues were trying to drag it against the flow of world history. The numbers involved and the seniority of the defectors were of a quite different order to now. The Roy Jenkinses, Shirley Williamses and David Owens of moderate Toryism – Leon Brittan, Lord Howe, Chris Patten, Kenneth Clarke – are still loyal. But there is life in the comparison, all the same.

Consider: how did the SDP most

hurt Labour? It was less by hard electoral challenge, more the deadly message sent to the whole British electorate that Labour was extreme, no longer a party for "the rest of us". Voters were already inclined to believe this, and Labour took well over a decade to recover.

The Conservatives are still in office, and in their case it might only take a few defectors making a similar point about extremism and a few more speeches from Michael Portillo of the kind he gave at last year's party conference for the image of Tory wildness to take hold in people's minds. If so, the disorganised flight by a handful of backbench MPs could have almost as harmful an impact on the Conservatives as the whole complex saga of the SDP had on Labour.

And there will be some more reckoning yet. The experience of Wilson in 1964-66 and then in 1974-76, and of Callaghan in 1976-79, was that although governing on a small or nil majority was possible and brought modest daily triumphs, it was destructive in the longer term. They were in office and even in power – but rarely in authority.

Their reputations were dulled by the twisting, wheedling and deal-making to keep their governments alive; the "fudge and mudge" from which Owen famously revolted was a habit of mind tutored by years of close late-night votes in the Commons.

There is a logic at work here. Small majorities make leaders compromise with the wild men of their party: such compromises repel the moderate supporters and in time the whole party is tainted as wild. It has happened before. It is happening now. It may not have an impact on the timing of the election; but it will surely have an impact on the result, which matters rather more.

The damage done by posturing tribunes on the Tory right to their party's prospects is incalculable. However great the fury of Tory leaders about Nicholson's defection, they should remember that the public cares far less than they for that obscure quality, party loyalty; it is far more interested in her message about extremism, and is listening attentively to the tone and timbre of their accusing voices. Be calm, gentlemen: be calm and be a little humble – you have no better option left.

Not since the Corn Laws has a Tory party split been so damaging as that over European Union, warns Emma Nicholson

Little England has no future

Why have I quit the Conservative Party – and joined the Liberal Democrats?

Let me dismiss out of hand some of the implausible explanations generated by the Conservative Central Office propaganda machine in the past 48 hours. I can assure readers of the Independent that it has not been out of "ambitious careerism" or "personal pique".

These attempts at trivialisation of what has been an agonisingly difficult personal decision are unworthy, although perhaps not surprising. But they also underestimate the nature of the crisis that besets the Government of this country and our whole political system, which have led me to this decision.

The Conservative government led by John Major seems paralysed by indecision, waiting for an election which cannot long be delayed and relying increasingly on the worst, hard-faced, populist instincts of people who would have been no more than a small and disregarded right-wing pressure group in the Tory party that I joined 21 years ago. The party has changed – and for the worse.

Nowhere, however, is the absence of strong strategic leadership more serious than on the issue of our membership of the European Union. We are now witnessing as serious a chasm in the governing party on this issue as the Conservatives experienced on the issue of the Corn Laws in the 19th century. Unfortunately, and this has been decisive for me, it seems that the Prime Minister has come down on the side of chauvinism, reflected not only in growing Euro-scepticism from

the Cabinet but in profoundly illiberal attitudes towards ethnic minorities and such unfortunate people as asylum-seekers.

Europe is our present and our future. That is why I have been dismayed that the lack of decisive leadership has threatened the advance we need to make to reach the heart of Europe. That is where Britain must be to exert its full influence, both for its own benefit and for all the nation states of the European Union, and to work together for "la culture de la paix", with international solutions to problems and conflicts worldwide.

For instance, I am involved in a campaign to promote understanding between the European and Islamic civilisations, so important on Europe's eastern borders, as we have seen in Bosnia and in our relations with Turkey.

We must draw upon the European Union's great strengths while correcting its weaknesses in order to derive the maximum benefit. We certainly need more openness, democracy and tolerance in Europe, but getting Europe right is the most important issue for our nation and every one of our citizens – for their prosperity, their jobs, their welfare and their well-being.

It is no good procrastinating, abandoning or fudging great principles and hopes in order to satisfy the Little Englanders. The debate was long ago joined and the issue decided. We have already had one referendum confirming our membership.

We should heed Ted Heath's warnings made yesterday in response to my concerns: "There is no future for Britain

outside Europe. The rest of the world realises that and is astonished that we should even risk it. As therefore our future is in it, let us be positive about it and make a success out of it for ourselves and our fellow members." My own sentiments exactly. I am a Euro-pragmatist who wants to work inside the Community instead of standing sneering on the touchlines.

If Europe has been the catalyst for my decision, there have been a host of other causes which have come together in such a way that unease has turned to disenchantment and, in the end, to this tough parting of the ways.

One example is education. I have a great personal commitment to better education. I want every child to have the opportunity, as of right, to develop his or her potential and talents. Not just the sons and daughters of the rich and the middle classes, but also those in our most deprived villages, city areas and housing estates. They deserve that right as well. I want smaller classes, better teachers, a generous supply of textbooks and other literature, computer technology and modern buildings to replace those that are old and dilapidated. That means investment. But it is essential that we invest in our children, who are our nation's future, both morally and intellectually.

On the crucial issues that matter most to me – such as Europe – the Liberal Democrats have been clear and consistent. On education they have made a pledge to raise standards, even if it means higher personal taxation. The more I have found myself at odds with Conservative policies and attitudes, the more I have realised how closely the Liberal Democrats mirror my own hopes and goals.

MPs on all sides have been aware of my unhappiness. I had already resigned as a Parliamentary Private Secretary to enable me to campaign more vigorously and openly for the causes I espouse.

Europe and education are the keys to a better future, but



Emma Nicholson at home yesterday: 'We must draw upon the European Union's great strengths while correcting its weaknesses'

Philip Meech

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Europe and education are the keys to a better future, but

it is now clear that Britain also needs a more fundamental regeneration of its democracy if we are to become a country of confident citizens once more.

We need to spread power instead of concentrating it, and to share knowledge instead of holding it tight, thus enabling our fellow countrymen and women to extend their freedom, to get involved and to make their own decisions. I

believe that the creation of freedom with responsibility represents a profound moral challenge to all of us in politics.

I am confident that as an active Liberal Democrat I can now contribute my talents to create a Britain of the 21st century which we can all learn to be proud of once again.

The writer is MP for Devon West and Torridge.

Oxford? Sorry prof, I'm into media studies

When a candidate opts for Birmingham instead, something is amiss in higher education

Since becoming an Oxford don (sounds quaint, doesn't it?) I have felt more and more like a monk shortly before the dissolution of the monasteries. As 1996 commences, that feeling of impending disaster is stronger than ever.

There is a difference, however. The dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII was essentially a political act: it was by confiscating and selling the assets of the religious orders that the king was able to buy support for his reformation of the church. (Royal claims that the monasteries were dens of vice were largely fictitious.)

If the dissolution of the ancient universities happens, however, it will be brought about by the "monks" themselves. This time dissolution will be a case of surreptitious – and perhaps even subconscious – suicide. And the "abuses" of which the universities will be accused will exist largely in the minds of those who teach there.

These morose reflections are not, I hasten to add, prompted by the news that (to quote yesterday's *Sunday Times*) "the rush for a degree has come to a halt". In fact, the latest figures from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), which show an 8 per cent drop in the number of university applicants compared with last year, are great news. What they reveal is that the Government's ill-judged "Great Leap Forward", whereby the polytechnics were renamed universities and all the others

were encouraged to increase their intakes, is at last slithering backwards.

In the Seventies, no more than one in 10 18-year-olds went to university. Since then, that proportion has been pushed up to about a third, with no accompanying increase in funding. Inevitably, therefore, more has meant worse – and the UCAS figures show a healthy reaction against this.

Significantly, it is the "new" universities that have fared worst this year. At Thames Valley and Anglia, applications have fallen by more than 50 per cent; for Derby and De Montfort, the figure is 37 per cent. In other words, sixth-formers have voted with their feet against Mickey Mouse degrees from Disneyland universities.

Also languishing, however, are the post-war glass-and-concrete universities. Once-trendy Sussex has seen applications fall by 40 per cent. Even the LSE, another mecca of Sixties studentdom, has had 13 per cent fewer applications.

The clear winners are Cambridge, where applications have gone up by 4.8 per cent, and Oxford, where they have slipped by a mere 2.8 per cent.

That is the good news. The bad news is not so clearly visible in the statistics. It is only when you have gone through the Oxbridge admissions process (as I have just done) that you detect the problem of qualitative decline. It is the decline of standards at the secondary school level which I fear poses the biggest threat to our



NIALL FERGUSON

traditional "centres of excellence".

Let me hasten to add that this decline is far from affecting all schools. On the contrary, there continue to be many – mostly, though far from exclusively, in the independent sector – whose standards are impressively high.

Each year, I examine and interview about 35 applicants who want to read history at my college, of whom about seven or eight are offered places (conditional on good A-level results). You might think such a harsh selection would be difficult to make. But every year I am impressed at how easy the process is. In truth, more than half of those who apply are non-starters. And the shocking thing is the low quality of schooling they have received compared with the seven clear winners.

If I had to pick out one source of this discrepancy, I would blame the rise of what might be called pulp education. The schools that produce the strong candidates are, generally speaking, those that teach the traditional "hard" subjects at A-level. The schools that have opted for "softer" subjects

– or trendier A-level boards – gravely handicap their pupils' chances of attending an elite university.

Yet there is no doubt about which way the tide is flowing. Last year's A-level statistics saw a continuing decline in the number of entries for physics and mathematics, of the order of 4 per cent (the previous year the figure was 6 per cent). Entries for psychology rose 13 per cent, while candidates for sports studies went up by more than a third. To put it another way, the total entry for maths and physics was equal to the total entry for communication studies, expressive arts, home economics, media studies, political studies, psychology, sociology and sport.

That has had its effects at university level. Applications for media studies courses rose by 54.5 per cent this year, overtaking demand for maths places.

The implication of this trend for Oxford and Cambridge is clear. So long as we do not offer such superficially alluring courses, our pool of potential applicants seems likely to stagnate, and perhaps even to decline. To give a single example, I know of one applicant this year, offered an unconditional place to read English at Oxford, who is considering turning it down to do media studies at Birmingham instead.

If this becomes more common, the fate of traditional subjects such as classics and chemistry may yet lie in store for all Oxbridge disciplines. The

ratio of places to applications in those two subjects already exceeds 60 per cent, so steep has been the decline in the number of applicants.

What this means is that Oxford and Cambridge are becoming increasingly traditionalist institutions, teaching traditional subjects to the best products of traditional schools. Now, that is all right by me. But I am a notorious educational conservative and I suspect it is not all right by most of my colleagues, who harbour the politically correct desire to make the undergraduate body more "socially representative". In the pursuit of this goal, they recently voted overwhelmingly to abolish the entrance examination, one of the last vestiges of the colleges' distinctive admissions system – despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that this will make the process of selection significantly less objective.

I cannot help wondering with trepidation what fresh "reforms" they will come up with in the new year, once they realise that this alone will not end the over-representation of the traditional (and mostly independent) schools at Oxbridge. Already, we have created a heavily over-subscribed course in economics and management. How long before the cry goes up for a degree course in media studies?

Ah well, I suppose I should look on the bright side. At least I will be well placed to apply for the chair.

Good-bye battery



Seiko Kinetic®. The first and only quartz watch that generates its own energy from your every movement. The perpetual accuracy of quartz – naturally, without a battery. Its tiny powerhouse converts even your slightest movement into electrical impulses. Ecologically sound and ultimately reliable. Seiko Kinetic is so efficient that you only need to wear it for one day to ensure enough energy reserves to last at least a week. Wear it continually and it will never let you down. It's built to last. Someday all watches will be made this way.

SEIKO KINETIC

The Independent offers readers a choice of four share tip portfolios for the coming year – complete with a health warning

Unipalm leads the pack through Internet gateway

In a year when takeovers, both real and rumoured, helped push the stock market to new highs it is fitting that a share which featured in one of the most unusual bids of 1995 should emerge top of the pile.

Unipalm outperformed all other shares, surging 455 per cent to 650p. Nimble footed investors could have claimed even more from the Internet gateway company as the shares briefly stretched to 875p.

At the other end of the scale is Ferrum, an engineer where a restructuring looks inevitable. It has the dubious distinction of suffering a 94 per cent decline.

The list of the 20 best and worst performing shares once again underlines that it is down among the second-liners and obscure fringe stocks where the greatest ability to out or underperform lurks.

Blue chips are conspicuous by their absence. Indeed the best of the FT-SE 100 constituents, Dixons, which joined the index last week, managed a 131 per cent gain and Burton 98 per cent compared with the 178 per cent achieved by Coda, a com-

puter group which emerged as the twentieth best performing share. But, on the same yardstick, blue chip losses are much more comfortable. P&O, afflicted by profit fears and dividend worries, is the worst performing Footsie stock with a 25 per cent decline.

The regional electricity companies, which spent the year succumbing to takeover bids or offering unimaginable rewards to their shareholders in a desperate attempt to keep the marauders at bay, failed to feature in the top 20.

Best of the financials is Standard Chartered. At the height of the banking takeover feast – which cost Kleinwort Benson and SG Warburg their independence – many a shrewd punter would have banked on Standard falling victim to a bid. Hope has, however, merely been deferred. Standard is regarded in some quarters as the hot tip for a bid this year.

Unipalm came to market at 100p in March 1994. Its shares bumped along around their placing level until April last year when its role as an Internet



Derek Pain, Stock Market Reporter of the Year, reviews the leading share price winners and the heaviest losers of 1995

provider started to attract the more alert investor. Then came an announcement bid talks were underway and the stock market excitedly anticipated an offer in the region of 700p.

The offer, after weeks of uncertainty, materialised at nearer 450p – in the Nasdaq traded paper of bidder UUNet Technologies, a little known Virginia-based group. Unipalm slumped as speculators not wishing to suffer the problems of owning Nasdaq traded shares sold in the market. But they quickly rued their haste. For UUNet is 15 per cent owned by Microsoft and suddenly the Bill Gates magic started to influence its shares. As they surged so did Unipalm.

An offer from Goldman Sachs of a low cost dealing facility in UUNet probably tempted some to accept the US group's shares rather than sell in the market. The tip roaring

Unipalm performance lifted Unipalm, giving a final offer value of around 740p, although the shares were squeezed up to 875p. When first posted the offer valued Unipalm at £97m, the closing price was £152m. It was a splendid run for managing director Peter Dawe who likes to describe himself as a "failed accountant". He left the company some £36.4m richer.

Not surprisingly bio-technology babies are well represented in the top 20. In a year which has seen some remarkable displays the likes of Oxford Molecular and Chiroscience are to the fore. So is British Biotech, which has surged 233 per cent on cancer drug hopes. It is now valued at £875m.

Farrington's presence shows that even in these days of booming high technology stocks there is still money to be made in spotting old fashioned shell com-

panies. For years Farrington has sought a role, flirting with reverse takeover deals as directors came and went.

Enter Trevor Hemmings, a director of the Scottish & Newcastle brewing giant. He made his fortune, estimated at £250m, from Pontins holiday camps, now owned by S&N. Through his Northern Trust Co he built a significant stake in Farrington, which has been as high as 18p, and then arranged for it to manage 210 pubs owned by a company where he and S&N are shareholders. Mr Hemmings still has pubs in his private portfolio and the betting is they will be pumped into Farrington which has retained its quote through its ownership of a solitary hotel.

Pan Andean Resources is the top performer on the Alternative Investment Market. It is in the stable of the Dublin entrepreneur John Teeling and has promising oil developments in Bolivia.

Alvis is probably the most staid and longest established group in the top 20. This maker of armoured fighting vehicles

Top 20 winners in 1995		
	1995 closing price	Year's % gain
Unipalm	650p	455
Oxford Molecular	288p	339
Azlan	503p	285
Learmont Burchett	285p	256
Pan Andean Res	17.5p	250
Farrington	15.5p	244
Chiroscience	327p	237
British Biotech	1,805	233
MAID	321p	229
Hampden	80p	228
Forward	620p	218
Alvis	140p	218
Psion	780p	212
Filtronic Comtek	496p	191
Riva	29p	190
Shield Diag	162p	189
Blagg	15p	186
Specialises	17p	183
Northamber	255p	180
Coda	214p	178

Bottom 20 losers in 1995		
	1995 closing price	Year's % fall
Ferrum	1.5p	94
Kendall	1p	94
Calderburn	31p	89
Roxspur	2,250p	89
Rodime	1,250p	89
Holmes & M	5,250p	82
Pengkalen	9.5p	82
Brit Building	31p	80
Tadpole Tech	77p	80
Trio	5p	80
Beverley	2p	80
Wakebourne	17.5p	78
Premier Health	13p	78
Regent Corp	5.5p	78
Utd Brew	1.5p	78
Enviromed	26p	77
YJ Lovell	15p	75
Cardinal Bus	21p	75
Cray Elec	42p	74
Eurotunnel	87p	69

has soared on the back of sharply higher profits from big overseas orders.

The motley band of losers are spread over many industries, ranging from engineering to marketing. And one, United Breweries, underlines that not

all shells offer quick rewards. It picked up a chain of pubs during the year, collecting new management in the process. The changes have yet to influence the shares and shareholder celebrations look like being deferred for a long time.

The best known casualties are the seemingly perennially damaged Eurotunnel, once again deeply involved in talks with its bankers, and Cray Electronics which switched from high flyer to lame duck as profits suffered a dramatic collapse.

From footwear to video, fund managers spread the risks

Many thanks to the five fund managers who took part in the Independent share tipping race a year ago. We are glad to say that twice that number have joined in this time.

Last year's crop produced a wide range of results, from the disappointing Govett & Co, which slipped 35 per cent, and Berisford, a 10 per cent faller, to Rank, which trod water, and the stars Dorling Kindersley, up 66 per cent, and Celltech, which ended the year 149 per cent higher.

Congratulations to Bernard Clark, our winner in 1995, who tipped Dorling, and to Philip Winston, who recommended Celltech. A bottle of bubbly is on its way to BZWIM.

Here are this year's entrants:

Bernard Clark Lloyds Investment Managers
Recent acquisitions from France Telecom and the French Atomic Energy Authority have given Sema Group a quantum leap into the European big league of well managed computer services companies such as Cap Gemini, Andersen Consulting and EDS (Europe). The industry is still growing fast. Sema's 530p share price could double by the end of 1996.

Philip Winston BZW Investment Management
Trinity International had an eventful year, becoming the largest UK regional newspaper publisher by acquiring most of

the Thomson UK newspapers. The acquisition will add more metropolitan franchises – notably Belfast and Newcastle – to its already strong stable of papers. Currently on a market rating but with the prospect of accelerating earnings, the shares at 342p are cheap.

Colin McLean Scottish Value Management
Where under-utilised assets or brands are brought under new management, there is often good potential for value to be released. My share for 1996 – Scholl, the personal care products business – fits this category. Scholl has considerable potential to improve the return on a neglected brand. Led by a new chief executive with extensive consumer products experience, the business is being refocused. Already Scholl has reported a strong first half performance, yet the shares are now well below their recent highs. I believe there could be a rerating of Scholl's shares – currently 194p – even without a bid.

Tom Crombie Scottish Equitable
It is not going to be easy to make money in 1996. I think the best chance will be to find a laggard stock that comes right. There are many laggards to choose from, and my choice is Arjo Wiggins in the paper and packaging sector. It has been one of the worst performing shares in

Fund managers	
Arjo Wiggins	165p
British Biotech	1,805p
BTR	329p
Eidos	693p
GEC	355p
IMI	328.5p
Scholl	194p
Sema	536p
Trinity International	342p
Tomkins	282p

the market in 1995. Profits have been under severe pressure, and brokers' forecasts are still probably not low enough. At 165p, the shares look attractive.

Justin Seager, Kleinwort Benson Investment Management
Eidos combines high growth potential from the evolution of visual media, with an existing earnings stream from games software. Eidos's technology compresses digital video signals enabling them to operate on a standard personal computer. This technology is available at an affordable cost using existing CD-ROM drives, avoiding the need for expensive upgrades. The company, shares in which trade at 693p, intends to seek a Nasdaq ADR listing in the spring of 1996, which should widen awareness of the company.

Mark Wasilewski, NatWest Investment Management
Having underperformed the market by a fifth in 1995, IMI shares at 328.5p are poised for a re-rating. Since 1990, profits have been poor because of subdued markets, writing-off the previous mistakes and a torrid time in the titanium market. However, major restructuring and improved market conditions promise recovery. Relationships with Coca-Cola and Pepsi in Drinks Dispense will

Vanessa James, Legal & General
Tomkins, headed by Greg Hutchings, should finally rehabilitate itself in the eyes of the UK stockmarket by the pending acquisition of Gates Rubber, a private US company. It is Tomkins's first major foray back into its base industrial business since the Rank Hovis McDougall acquisition. We expect an upward rating of Tomkins shares, now 282p, to follow.

Kevin Fenelon, Scottish Amicable
GEC is set to produce strong outperformance in 1996. Not only are the fundamentals improving rapidly but shareholder value will also be unlocked by a more rapid pace of corpo-



In the frame: Greg Hutchings, chairman of Tomkins, tipped for 1996 both by fund managers and the Independent City team

rate activity. With an order book of £1.4bn the potential for growth is enormous. Further upside potential arises from the imminent retirement of Lord Westcock. Subsequent management changes will herald much sharper focus on the delivery of shareholder returns. Shares are currently at 355p.

Mike Grimble, Norwich Union
The strong advances in the US and UK equities in particular put these markets on demanding ratings in historic terms. Any failure to meet profits growth expectations in 1996, as economic growth slows, could cause the markets to sell off. In the spirit of the contest, and looking, for once, through short term glasses, one stock which could perform relatively well in 1996 is BTR. Earnings could prove more resilient than the market's current pessimistic view, and from the base of a relatively high yield, the stock could outperform in 1996.

The funds managed by our tipsters may hold or deal in the shares which are recommended.

A touch of spice and solid stocks

Putting together a portfolio in what has been a very strong year for the stockmarket is more than usually challenging. For 1996 the Independent City desk has tried to spread its risk widely, covering spicy stocks (some from the new AIM market) and other hopefully solid performers. The 10 shares chosen range from the FT-SE 100 to the market's smallest minnows. Here's hoping for another prosperous year.

The market had been waiting for Tomkins's next big deal since the poorly received Rank Hovis McDougall buy three years ago. So it was no surprise that the market warmed to the recent Gates purchase. In the year to April 1997, the shares traded on a p/e of 13 and yield 4.3 per cent which hardly reflects the quality and likely change in sentiment as Gates is bedded in.

The Trocadero is something of a blue sky investment. The leisure site, spun off from property group Burford and now quoted on AIM, is very much in its infancy. It has enormous potential, located in one of the busiest streets for London's tourist trade. A gamble at 46p on the entrepreneurial skills of the Burford team, Nick Leslau and Nigel Wray.

Jim Leng put 30p on to the price of Laporte shares when his appointment as chief executive was unveiled in August. Just over three months later he wiped all that off and more, leaving the shares 189p down at a year's low of 613p, after he announced an £85m restructuring charge and profits warning. Unless trading is absolutely gruesome, Laporte can only move ahead this year.

Field Group has had a strong run in 1995 after the market finally woke up to the virtues of this maker of upmarket cartons. The shares have taken nearly two years to break decisively through the 250p issue price as worries over paperboard costs started to subside. At 327p the shares are still good value on a forward rating of under 14.

Pet City was one of the more colourful new issues of 1995 and could prove one of the most successful. When the shares were placed on the AIM in December they soared to a near 20 per

City desk tips	
Allied Domecq	525p
Caradon	195.5p
Continental Foods	84p
Field Group	327p
Hillsdown	169p
Laporte	674p
Pet City	382p
Stakis	805p
Tomkins	282p
Trocadero	46p

cent premium. The company operates 35 pet supermarkets and aims to build a chain of 300 over the next eight years.

It was a grim 1995 for food companies; the sector was laid low by rising raw material prices and the hot summer. Our tip of Hillsdown is founded on the premise that 1996 can hardly be any worse. The shares fell from 200p in August to 169p by the year end.

Allied Domecq is a bet that Sir Christopher Hogg, the former Courtaulds chairman, can bring a more focused approach to this Cinderella of the drinks giants. The shares have relentlessly underperformed both the market and other drink shares and could quickly respond.

Continental Foods is the market leader in children's snacks, an area more prosperous than the ailing crisp market. It is buying a big rival for about £10m. Profits last year were £1.1m and more than £2.2m seems likely this year.

The leisure sector will yield an ample share of the stock market's shocks and pleasant surprises in 1996. Stakis, the hotels and casinos company, is well placed to power ahead. Profits are forecast to surge more than 20 per cent to circa £31m, and there is also a chance of a bid.

Picking potential winners among the big guns of British industry is, as ever, fraught with difficulties. Many of the shares are fully valued, leaving investors to pick and choose among recovery plays.

With this in mind, the Caradon building products group looks as good a bet as any. At 155p, the price is now 20p above the year's low and some 80p shy of its 1995 peak.



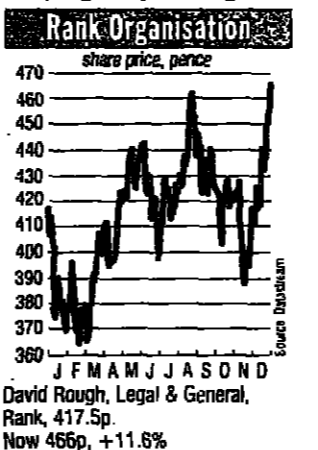
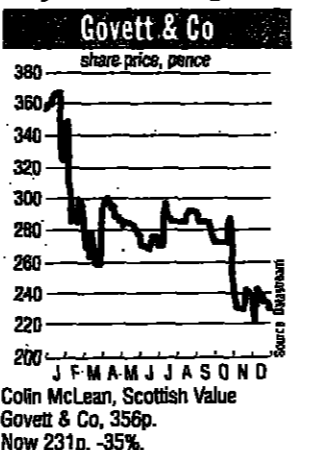
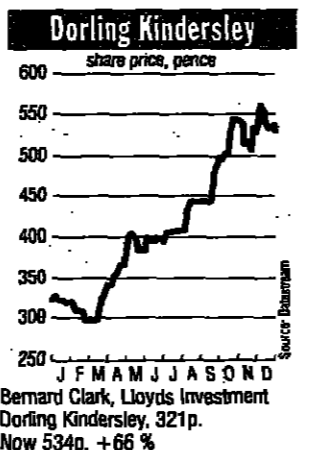
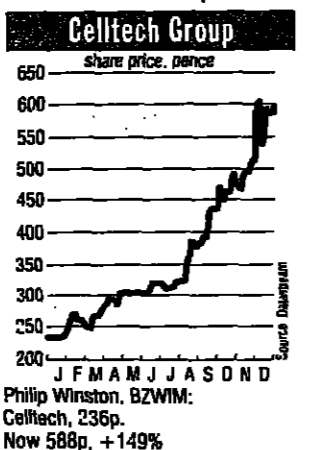
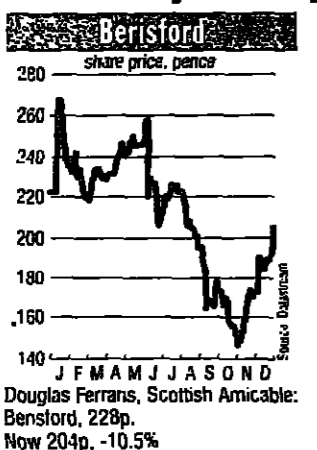
Florence Warner: offering a random selection of shares

languishing at 27p. Believe it or not, the pen then homed in on Mirror Group – a major shareholder in the Independent – which trades at 176p.

Florence, who was by now displaying all the signs of an out of form dart player, hit the following targets and accompanying numbers:

Powerhouse 25p, GUS 685p, Next 456p, Quicks Group 135p, Mercury Euro Partnership 91.5p, Christie Group 211p, Guinness Peat Group 325p, and finally Essex Furniture 107p.

How they did last year: the 1995 performance of the shares selected by fund managers on this page a year ago



Winning formula from the O'Higgins chemistry set

In the long run, shares have given investors far and away the best investment return. Superior performance, however, comes at the price of higher risk and assembling a portfolio that reduces danger while maximising returns is a big challenge.

A year ago we composed two portfolios based on the investment thinking of Michael O'Higgins, an American fund manager who claims in a fascinating book called *Beating the Dow* to have found a share selection technique that can outperform the market consistently, without increasing volatility or risk. The O'Higgins theory is based on three basic premises about share selection. It is a simple technique for private investors to use and needs little in-depth knowledge of individual stocks. Some fund management groups are adopting the technique for PEP plans. His first criterion for selection is size, on the grounds that leading companies are considerably less likely to fail

completely. Eliminating that possibility reduces risk, especially for small portfolios.

Secondly, Mr O'Higgins looks for high yielding shares. He believes a low share price relative to a stock's dividend payout is the best indication of a share being irrationally out of favour. The other advantage of high yield is that, on a cumulative basis, the income from a share represents a very high proportion of its total return over the years. The difference in total return between two shares with the same capital growth but yields of say 4 per cent and 6 per cent will be massive over a period of more than a few years.

Finally he looks for low priced shares as the companies tend to be the smallest of the Top 100 and can grow faster. The success of the system over the past two decades has been extremely consistent. Over more than 18 years to 1991, portfolios selected on the O'Higgins criteria would have generated a compound annual

The O'Higgins portfolios			
Last year's selections		By market value	
By share price	Share performance over year (%)	By share price	Share price at end of 1995
Hanson	-13.3	MEPC	+3.4
Sun Alliance	+29.4	Thames Water	+16.1
MEPC	+3.4	Redland	-15.4
BAT	+31.6	Legal & General	+55.0
Legal & General	+55.0	Sun Alliance	+29.4
Average	+21.22	Average	+17.7
FTSE100	+20.3		
This year's portfolio		By market value	
By share price	Share price at end of 1995	By share price	Share price at end of 1995
British Steel	162.75p	Thames Water	£2.30n
Hanson	192.5p	P&O	£2.90n
National Grid	199.5p	General Accident	£3.10n
British Gas	254p	British Steel	£3.30n
BT	354p	North West Water	£3.30n

return (with dividends reinvested) of 19.4 per cent compared with 10.4 per cent for the Dow Jones index. To put that in perspective, £10,000 invested in the O'Higgins portfolios would have grown to almost £250,000 over the period. The same amount invested in a portfolio matching the performance of the Dow would be worth only £60,000. The method would

have worked just as well in the UK. Adapted to the London stockmarket, this involves the following three simple steps: 1 Choose the ten highest yielding shares from the FT-SE 100. 2 Of these, pick the five with the lowest share price. If you think the lowest share price is a crude measure, choose the five with the lowest market capitalisations (as the tables show, we

did both last year and have repeated the dual selection. 3 Buy the shares and sit on them for 12 months before repeating the first two steps and rejigging the portfolio.

So how did the system work last year and which shares does it throw up for a 1996 portfolio? Interestingly there was little difference in performance between the portfolios selected for low share prices and for market value. Both broadly matched the performance of the FT-SE 100 index, but including their higher yields they would have slightly outperformed.

The lowest share price portfolio included only one howler, Hanson, which continued to suffer from market scepticism.

MEPC (rod water as property remained in the doldrums. But the buoyant fortunes of the financial sector drove the remaining three shares to stunning outperformance. BAT flourished on break-up speculation. Bid speculation lit a fire under L&G, and an upturn in the in-

As easy as child's play

To inject a bit of festive fun into this year's share tips from the City professionals, our City staff and Michael O'Higgins, the American investment guru, we also include a portfolio of 10 stocks chosen at random by Florence Warner, aged 4½, the daughter of the Independent Business and City Editor.

Random selection can often prove as fruitful a method of picking stock market winners as the most carefully researched portfolios.

We nonetheless present the following selection with an appropriately unambiguous health warning.

The first company selected – by throwing a ball-point pen at the share price pages – was Bensons Crisps, an out of favour penny stock which is currently

today's television & radio

pick of the day

THE PEACOCK SPRING

This undemanding but pleasant slice of late 19th-century India is based on Rumer Godden's novel, following a young schoolgirl (Hattie Morahan) who is summoned from England to New Delhi to join her diplomat father (Peter Egan) and a glamorous governess. She becomes involved with one of the locals (Naveen Andrews). Concludes tomorrow.



Morahan and Andrews in bloom

With the Jane Austen seams nearing exhaustion (both *Emma* and *Sense and Sensibility* have been completed and are ready to roll), a new source is required to fuel the growing public demand for drama with costumes. So step forward Thomas Hardy, reckoned by television executives to have significant reserves of both to exploit. Although in his case it is more melodrama, and frankly he wasn't that much of a frock man.

Hardy occupies ground somewhere between the cynicism of Austen and the sexual psychobabble of DH Lawrence. His is a world charged with passion, romance, disappointment, idealism and fatalism; his characters learn that the laws of nature are there to keep any human ambition in check; his books do not have happy endings. It is worth reminding yourself of Hardy's intensity as a writer, because you would never have guessed it from the adaptation of his *Return of the Native* (Sun BBC2).

In order to condense his vision into 100 minutes, all the scale of Hardy's creation has been stripped, leaving a frail skeleton of a plot which frequently weaved towards



review

Jim White

the farcical. It was like a Stella Gibbons parody out there, all childish misunderstandings and intimations of dark deeds, letters going astray and doors not being answered. Celia Imrie and Joan Plowright rolling their eyes around as if auditioning for the Hammer House of Horror. Laughable scene followed laughable scene: the first meeting of the lovers, through the clearing mist with a heavenly chorus syringing away in the background; the participants in the rural love pentangle all arriving beside a raging torrent at the same moment; the hooded heroine braving the final storm looking like a participant in a Scottish Widows television commercial.

The real crime of this production, though, was the way the tragic collision between the compulsive idealism of Clym Youghie and Eustacia Vye (she casts him as her ticket

out of the choking claustrophobia of her surroundings; he sees her as the reason to stay) were reduced to the pat incompatibility of Curly and Raquel. Actually, that's not fair: Curly and Raquel's relationship is realised with considerably more subtlety.

It wasn't helped by the acting. A smudge of Goth-style maeve lipstick and a geographically uncertain accent were not sufficient to transform Catherine Zeta Jones into the woman of appetite and zest that is Eustacia. Instead, she played her as the prickliest of Egon Heath. "I have this great fear that the excitement will not last," she said, early on. We should have trusted her judgement on that one.

And Ray Stevenson was such a weak-jawed wimp of a Clym that you felt like reaching into the screen and slapping him about the face with a damp Marigold glove. He wasn't just visually impaired; Stevenson played him as a version of Pete Townshend's Tommy: deaf, dumb and blind. But most particularly dumb. Not that everything was miscast, however. Exmoor should receive a Bafta for the brilliance of its portrayal of Hardy's real hero: Egon Heath.

Also looking sumptuous was "Louis Malle's India" in *Five Cat* (Sun BBC2). Re-cut as a tribute to the director who died in 1995, it was, apparently, the work of which Malle was most proud. You could see why.

In essence it's a grand video diary on his seven-month journey through the sub-continent. Malle managed to turn up image after image which made those Indi-ahh adverbs look positively frugal; the funeral procession led by a band tunelessly playing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow"; the camel that was going round in endless circles, mixing cement; the ascetic wandering the streets of Delhi wearing, for no apparent reason, 100 skewers embedded in his person.

The Indian government went apologetic when the film was first screened, throwing the BBC out of the country. Twenty-five years on, it is hard to see why, unless they simply got bored of long sequences involving folk-dancing and fishing. Or perhaps, as the Exmoor tourist film, they just didn't want the rest of the world to get the impression that everyone who lives there is barking.

film of the day

DEFENCE OF THE REALM

11.15pm C4

The late Denholm Elliott is in some danger of being best remembered for his embarrassing performance as an imbecilic curator in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. This efficient thriller shows him in a marginally more dignified light, as a boozey journalist investigating the conspiracy behind an apparent political sex scandal involving Greta Scacchi.



Greta love hath no man

BBC 1

- 7.00 Children's BBC:** Classical Music Animations. 7.25 Favourite Songs. 7.50 Joshua Jones. 8.00 Playdays. 8.20 Joe 90. 8.45 Peter Pan and the Pirates. 9.10 Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles. 9.30 Stone Protectors. 9.55 Blue Peter - High Adventure.
- 10.25 The Princess and the Goblin.** Animation. A princess is forced to marry an ugly goblin. Social satire for the Nineties, voiced by Jess Ackland, Rik Mayall and Mollie Sugden (6273468).
- 11.45 Bugsy Malone** (Alan Parker 1976 UK). All-singing, all-dancing, all-child gangster movie in which the gunfights consist of foam and custard pies. Jodie Foster stars (632517).
- 1.15 News; Weather** (73742710). *
- 1.25 Neighbours** (S) (57615343). *
- 1.45 EastEnders** (R) (S) (4950130). *
- 2.40 Suburban Mayhem** (Burt Kennedy 1991 US). Wrestling star Hulk Hogan makes the break for movie success as an alien living underground in the suburbs. Surprisingly diverting (S) (1169888). *
- 4.05 Roadkill** (Doherty's Little Red Riding Hood). With a stupid and lazy wolf (voiced by Danny DeVito), an alcoholic granny and a wilfully cruel Red Riding Hood (Julie Walters) (S) (6994420). *
- 4.50 Final Score** (S) (9452642).
- 5.15 News, Local News, Weather** (4892178). *
- 5.30 Neighbours** (R) (S) (494536). *
- 5.55 Never Say Never Again** (Irvin Kershner 1983 US). Blied has his eye on world domination again. The grizzled Sean Connery comes back into bondage to foil him. Pleasant semi-spoof, with Klaus Maria Brandauer, Barbara Carrera and Kim Basinger (S) (59604517). *
- 8.00 EastEnders** (S) (9569). *
- 8.30 Goodnight Sweetheart.** Return of the time-travel sitcom. Gary wants to see in both New Years. Ho ho ho (S246). *
- 9.00 The Peacock Spring.** 1/2. New Delhi, 1959. A diplomat's daughter falls with a local gardener and causes scandal in this two-part adaptation of Rumer Godden's novel. See *Pick of the Day* (S) (6757739).
- 10.25 News, Local News, Weather** (357913). *
- 10.45 Match of the Day.** Highlights of Liverpool vs Nottingham Forest, and Tottenham Hotspur vs Manchester United (S) (826275).
- 11.35 The Rolling Stones: Voodoo Lounge Live.** The Stones, live in Miami (S) (208055).
- 1.10 Carry on Doctor** (Gerald Thomas 1968 UK). Oo-er, Nurse, that's a big one etc (4043918). *
- 2.40 Weather** (7691260). To 2.40am.
- REGIONS.** Scot: 1.15pm News; Weather. 4.50 Afternoon Sports. 10.45 Sports - Match of the Day.

BBC 2

- 7.15 The Square Peg** (John Paddy Carstairs 1958 UK). An almost watchable Norman Wisdom comedy. In this, he is accidentally parachuted behind enemy lines during the war (477517).
- 8.45 A Day at the Races** (Sam Wood 1937 US). One of the Marx Brothers' best showings. Something to do with a sanatorium, a group of bankers, a blond siren and a steeped horse (30853197).
- 10.30 The Voyage of Charles Darwin** (R) (76710).
- 12.30 Solid Conductors: The World Orchestra for Peace.** As part of the UN's 50th anniversary celebrations, Sir Georg Solti hand-picked a 90-piece orchestra to play in the Victoria Hall in Geneva. Including Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*, the last scene from Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* and Rossini's *William Tell Overture* (S) (5648710).
- 1.50 1996 World Professional Darts Championship.** Live coverage of first-round matches (S) (61766517).
- 4.15 Ski Sunday Special.** Ski-jumping from Germany (S) (7555998).
- 4.50 Coastermania.** A history of the rollercoaster. They have their roots in 18th-century Russia, apparently (S) (2104739).
- 5.40 Pavarotti and Domingo at the Met.** The two heavyweight singers in a double-bill from New York's Metropolitan Opera, featuring Puccini's *Il Tabarro*, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, and conductor James Levine (S) (21453265).
- 8.00 Burt Bacharach... This is Now.** Dusty Springfield narrates a profile of the Prince of Smooth (727994). *
- 8.50 Another Foot in the Past** (858246).
- 9.00 Arena.** An exploration of the culinary world of Elvis Presley (1826). *
- 10.00 Grand Canyon** (Lawrence Kasdan 1991 US). Danny Glover saves Kevin Kline from a gang attack. Kevin turns round Danny's lonely and griefed-less life in return. Then they help some teenagers. We all have something to offer morality tale of the smug and least inventive kind, with a welcome appearance by Steve Martin and his wiggy legs, plus Mary McDonnell, Mary-Louise Parker and Alfre Woodward (91105915).
- 12.10 1996 World Professional Darts Championship.** More first-round matches of this compelling spectacle. And that's just the players (9163005).
- 1.10 The Days** (Wang Xiaohui 1993 China). Slow but gripping portrait of the relationship between two artists in the fast-changing modern China. Both Dong and Chun teach at the Beijing Art School (1338717).
- 2.25 Weather** (6676918). To 2.35am.

ITV/London

- 6.00 GMTV.** 6.00 News and weather. 6.05 Features special. 7.00 News. 7.05 Tom and Jerry Kids. 7.30 Barney. 8.00 Galaxy High. 8.30 Star Trek and the Jewel Riders. 8.55 Mighty Morphin Power Rangers (2233536).
- 9.25 Win, Lose or Draw.** A measly £250 up for grabs (S) (4779130).
- 9.55 Bugs Bunny** (12-1333).
- 10.20 Warner Brothers Cartoon** (7830710).
- 10.35 Hill's Angels** (Ted Kotcheff 1978 US). Leadon comedy in which a war's female prisoners form a crime squad (S) (37057246).
- 12.30 News; Weather** (21927468). *
- 12.40 Make 'Em Laugh** (R) (6001246).
- 1.10 The Stalking Moon** (Robert Mulligan 1969 US). A scout helps a woman escape her Apache captors. Stars Gregory Peck (29292178).
- 3.00 On Her Majesty's Secret Service** (Peter Hunt 1969 UK). Bond, Bond, Bond. George Lazenby's turn as the old rook, on the track, as usual, of the ruthless Blofeld. He's no Connery, but this is probably the best Bond movie, partly thanks to Diana Rigg's involvement as the most flesh-and-blood "Bond girl" yet, and partly thanks to the ski stunts and Alpine scenery (64503604). *
- 5.25 News; Weather** (4876130). *
- 5.40 Curly Sue** (John Hughes 1991 US). A film with "Curly" in its title is bound to feature a cute moppet. This one (Alisan Porter), is half of a con-tricking double-act with James Belushi, cleaned up by lawyer Kelly Lynch (S) (49153420). *
- 7.30 Coronation Street.** Curly and Raquel are in good spirits, you'll be glad to hear (81). *
- 8.00 Bruce's Price Is Right** (S) (5807). *
- 8.30 The Ruth Rendell Mystery Movie: Heartstones.** Daughter suspects father of bumping off his first wife (60410). *
- 10.30 Call Red: Behind the Scenes** (775178).
- 10.40 News; Weather** (991008). *
- 10.50 Adrift** (Christian Duguay 1993 US). Couple on cruise make the time-honoured mistake of rescuing a couple of strangers in distress (74484333).
- 12.40 Absence of Malice** (Sydney Pollack 1980 US). Reporter Sally Field is duped by the government. Intelligent exploration of the wrong side of the media (23949734).
- 2.50 The Intruder** (Guy Hamilton 1955 UK). War vets suffer hardships. Stars Jack Hawkins (8532289).
- 4.15 Profile** (R) (S) (17143531).
- 4.25 Dead Men's Tales** (18177395).
- 4.50 Life in Danger** (Jerry Bishop 1959 UK). Villagers hunt an escaped murderer (2258685).
- 5.55 News** (7711463). To 6.00am.

Channel 4

- 6.35 Think Tank** (R) (S) (5306401).
- 7.00 The Big Breakfast** (36062).
- 9.00 Saved by the Bell: The New Class** (R) (4707913).
- 9.25 Babylon 5** (R) (S) (6106410). *
- 10.20 California Dreams** (R) (1060246).
- 10.45 Biker Mice from Mars** (7393333).
- 11.10 Mork and Mandy** (R) (S) (9893517). *
- 11.40 The Morning Line.** The day's nags previewed (S) (5171401).
- 12.10 Sesame Street** (5048159).
- 1.10 Channel 4 Racing** from Cheltenham. Brough Scott introduces the 1.35 Seven Spots Novices Chase (2m 50); 2.10 Steel Plate Trial Juvenile Novices Hurdle (2m 10); 2.45 A S W Handicap Chase (4m 10); 3.20 Unicorn Homes Spa Hurdle (3m 110 yd) (84334410).
- 3.40 Snapshots: Enoch Powell.** Enoch Powell returns to Cambridge University (R) (1488710).
- 4.00 Backstage.** Valerie Singleton makes her C4 debut with a new daily quiz show, testing contestants' memory about the last 50 years (10).
- 4.30 Countdown** (S) (94). *
- 5.00 Love in the Afternoon** (S) (6772). *
- 6.00 The Cosby Show** (R) (59). *
- 6.30 Hollyoaks.** The classless Chester teenagers organise a party. Followed by Channel 4 News Summary and Weather (S) (249710). *
- 7.05 Secrets of the Rainforest** (S) (767791).
- 8.00 Stolen.** A repeat Short Stories documentary in which an elderly woman tries to track down her porcelain collection, which was stolen in a break-in at her house (3449).
- 8.30 Nuns on the Run** (Jonathan Lynn 1990 UK). Incompetent crooks Eric Idle and Robbie Coltrane steal a million from the Triads and hide out in a nunnery. Not funny (15761401). *
- 10.15 Glasshouse.** Repeat Cutting Edge documentary about the military corrective training centre, or "glasshouse" in Colchester (R) (961371). *
- 11.15 Defence of the Realm** (Denholm Elliott 1985 UK). Prime slice of 1980s paranoia, shot in sombre, muted tones and starring Gabriel Byrne as a journalist investigating the scandal surrounding an Opposition MP Greta Scacchi, Denholm Elliott and Ian Bannen co-star. See *Film of the Day* (110913).
- 1.00 A Fire Has Been Arranged** (Leslie Hiscott 1935 UK). Released from jail, crooks Flanagan and Allen discover a shop has been built over the spot where they buried their ill-gotten gains. Worth it alone for the participation of the sublime Alastair Sim (9433181).
- 2.15 Calypso Season** (R) (683717). To 3.15am.

ITV/Regions

- ASLON.** As London except. 12.40pm Coronation Street (6001246). 1.10 Film: Dennis. Comic strip comedy (29292178). 12.40am Film: Bonnie and Clyde. Classic interpretation of the US dream gone horribly sour, as a pair of gun-toting robbers (Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway) cruise across Depression-era America in search of fresh banks and Grocery stores to rob (640593). 2.40am Film: The Wild Bunch. Sam Peckinpah's violent, landmark Western starring William Holden (50549579). 5.25-5.55am The Village Show (4873442).
- THE YEEZY/SHIRE.** As London except. 12.40pm Coronation Street (6001246). 1.10 Film: Return of the Seven. Western starring Yul Brynner, Robert Fuller and Warren Oates (29292178). 12.40am Film: Happy New Year. Comedy starring Peter Falk, Wendy Hughes and Charles Durning. An American version of Gaude Lascous French caper Le Bon Année in which a pair of sophisticated crooks set off for Palm Beach with plans of conning their way to a fortune (234111). 2.15am Film: The Pick-Up Artist. Romantic comedy starring Molly Ringwald (485717). 3.45am An Evening with Plácido Domingo (338640). 4.45-5.55am Oliver Twist (1079563).
- CENTRAL.** As London.
- ITV.** As London except. 12.40pm Coronation Street (6001246). 1.10 Film: A Green Journey. Romantic drama starring Angela Lansbury (29292178). 12.40am Film: Bonnie and Clyde (640593). 2.40am Film: The Wild Bunch. Western starring William Holden, Ernest Borgnine and Robert Ryan (50549579). 5.25am The Village Show (4454444). 5.25-5.55am An Invitation to Remember (446821).
- MERIDIAN.** As London except. 12.40pm Coronation Street (6001246). 1.10 Alice in Wonderland (5029130). 2.35 The Munsters Today (1173807). 12.40am Film: Bonnie and Clyde (640593). 2.40am Film: The Wild Bunch. Sam Peckinpah's violent, landmark Western starring William Holden (50549579). 5.25-5.55am Invitation to Remember (4873442).
- WESTCOUNTRY.** As London except. 12.40pm Coronation Street (6001246). 1.10 Film: Return of the Seven. Western starring Yul Brynner (29292178). 12.40am Film: Bonnie and Clyde (640593). 2.40am Film: The Wild Bunch. Sam Peckinpah's violent, landmark Western starring William Holden (50549579). 5.25-5.55am Invitation to Remember (4873442).
- S4C.** As C4 except. 9.00am Saved by the Bell (4707913). 12.10pm Copy Cat Crawlers (1879449). 12.40am Star Trek: The Next Generation (1879449). 1.10 Channel 4 Racing from Cheltenham (84334410). 5.00 P. Round a Round (7265). 5.30 Riverdance - The Show (17555). 7.00 P. P. Own (760062). 7.25 P. Syd Ar Badwer (828975). 8.00 Jon Jones. Y-Hunter Coron (3449). 8.30 News (589604). 8.45 Cymru Dydd Cilan (957178). 9.45 Sgorio (946062). 10.45 Fraser (535710). 11.15-12.55am Film: A Boy and His Dog. (461159).

Radio

- Radio 1.** 6.30am Clive Warren 9.00-9.30 from the 90s with Jo Whalley and Kevin Greening. 4.00 UK Top 40 of 1995. 7.00 Live from the 90s 10.00 Meat On A Wheel 12.10 Wendy Lloyd. 4.00-6.00am Clive Warren.
- Radio 2.** 6.00am-6.30am Kennedy 8.05 Wake Up to Wogan. 9.00-9.30am Lorraine. 1.00 The Comedy Show. 2.00 Double Trouble. 3.30 Ed Stewart. 4.00 Station of the Year. 7.00 Bert Leach. 8.00 Mervyn Stutter's Jump. 9.00-9.30am The 90s. 10.00 Enchanted Evenings with Liz Robertson. 10.30 The Jamisons. 12.05 Digby Fairweather. 1.00 Adair. 3.00-6.00am Steve Madden.
- Radio 3.** 6.00-6.30am On Air. With Andrew McGregor. Rachmaninov: O come, let us worship; Bliss; the Lord, O my soul (Wespers) Corydon Singers (Best). Strauss: Aus Italien (Dresden Staatskapelle/Kempe). Schubert: Piano Trio in C (Lorians) (Yoshiko Arai, violin, Seppo Kinnanen, cello, Juhani Lagerspetz, piano). Saint-Saëns: Three Rhapsodies on Breton Songs, Op. 7 (Marie-Claire Alain, organ). Gabrieli: Bucinate in neomenia tuba a 19; Canon XVII a 12 (La Capella Ducale, Musica Fata. Capella Willems, Weygand, Beim Anritzt das neuen Jahres (Barmbein Symphony Chorus and Orchestra/Rickenbacher).
- 9.00 Morning Collection** with Paul Gambaccini. Schubert: Impromptu in G flat (1899 No 3) (Kristian Zimerman, piano). Bach: Suite No 1 in C (BWV 1066) (English Baroque Soloists/Gerdien). Beethoven: Triple Concerto (David Oistrakh, violin, Mstislav Rostropovich, cello, Sviatoslav Richter, piano, Berlin Philharmonia/Karajan).
- 10.15 New Year's Day Concert.** Brian Kay introduces the Vienna Philharmonia's traditional concert of music by the Strauss family live from the Golden Hall at the Vienna Musikverein, Part 1. 10.45-11.15am An dem düsteren Schenkeberg. Part 2.
- 12.30 Composer of the Week:** Edward Elgar.
- 1.30 Ulster Orchestra.** Conductor Adrian Leaper, Nikolai Demidenko (piano). Shostakovich: Concerto.

choice



- Radio 4.** 6.30am-6.55am The Nuremberg Trial (7.20pm R4) is an utterly compelling reconstruction of the most important trial of this century - it takes the trouble to question whether this was the right way for the victors to finish off the Second World War, while showing that it was, nevertheless, an astonishing marshalling of reason against inhumanity.
- 6.25 Prayer for the Day.** 6.30 Over the Counter (2/2). 6.55 Weather. 7.00 Today. 8.40 Harvest of the Cold Months. By Elizabeth David. (1/5). 9.00 News. 9.05 Start the Week. 10.00 PM News. With Great Pleasure. Comedian Jenny Eclair introduces selections from her new album. (2/5). 10.00 LW: Daily Service. 10.15 LW: Children's BBC Radio 4. That's the Name of the Game, by Sara Volger and Janet Burchett. 10.30 Woman's Hour. 11.30 Hard Shoulder. Soft Touch. 12.00 News; You and Yours. 12.25 Who Goes There? 12.55 Weather. 1.00 The World at One. 1.40 The Archers. 1.55 Shipping Forecast. 2.00 News; The Death of Ivan Ilyich. Anton Lesser stars in Leo Tolstoy's classic tale of a middle-class man with middle-class aspirations who is forced into a re-evaluation of his entire life. 3.00 News; The Afternoon Shift. 4.00 News. 4.05 Kaleidoscope. Jeremy Isaacs caught up with the lesser Luciano Pavarotti as he took his summer break in Pizzo. 4.45 Short Story: Family Feelings. Food for Love, written and read by Deborah Moggach. (1/5). 5.00 PM. 5.55 Shipping Forecast. 6.00 Six O'Clock News. 6.15 The Enchanted Rain. By Jacqueline Balcells, translated by Janice Molloy. 6.30 News Quiz of the Week. (2/2). 7.00 News. 7.05 The Archers. 7.20 The Monday Play: The Nuremberg Trial. Dramatised from the trial transcripts by Peter Goodchild, with the participation of some of the defence and prose-

cutting lawyers and relatives of the defendants. See *Choice*.

Radio 5. 6.30am The Breakfast Programme. 8.35 The Magazine. 11.05 Dirty News. Update 11.35 Pioneers and Presidents. 12.00 Midday with Mair. 2.05 Sport on Five. 5.55 The Morning Match. 10.05 A Sport. Chance 11.00 Night Extra. 11.35 Spaced Out 12.05 The Other Side of Midnight. 2.05 Up All Night. 5.00-6.00am Morning Reports.

Classic FM. 10.10-11.00am. 6.00am Sarah Lucas. 9.00 Henry Kelly. 12.00 At the Opera House. 2.00 Classic Christmas Ballet. Adolphus Adams. Giselle. 4.00 Rob Cowart's 1896 Show. 6.00 New News Year. 7.00 Ken Russell's Movie Classics. 8.00 Evening Concert. Offenbach: Overture: Opheus in the Underworld. Mozart: Exultate Jubilate. Tchaikovsky: Fantasy Overture: Romeo and Juliet. Saint-Saëns: Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso. Handel: Fireworks Music. Kachiburlin: Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia. George Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue. 10.00 Robert Booth. 1.00 Hits Through the Night. 4.00-6.00am Mark Griffiths.

- Virgin Radio.** 12.15-1.15pm. 6.00am Russ and Jane. 9.00 Richard Skinner. 12.00 Graham Dene. 4.00 Nicky Home. 7.30 Paul Coyne. 10.00 Mark Forest. 2.00-6.00am Robin Banks.
- World Service.** 1.00am World News. 1.10 Words of Faith. 1.15 Sinatra: A Master at Work. 1.45 Health Matters. 2.00 Newsday. 2.30 Quote, Unquote. 3.00 World News. 3.15 Sports Roundup. 3.30 John Peel. 4.00 Newsday. 4.30 Off the Shelf. Peter Pan. 4.45 Early Version. 5.00 Newsday. 5.30 What's News. 5.45 On the Move.

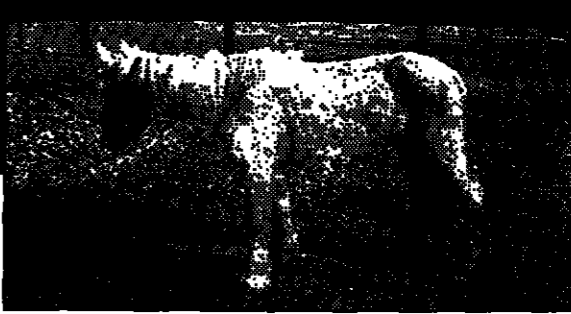
Satellite



choice

- Sky One.** 7.00am DJ Set (2562265). 7.01 X-Men (50284). 7.30 Ocean & Clive (77917). 8.00 Mighty Morphin Power Rangers (77371). 8.30 Talk That in Berlin (21913). 9.30 Sky Talk. 10.30 Concentration (43178). 11.00 Sally Jessy Raphael (59739). 12.00 Jeopardy! (72130). 12.30 Mighty Morphin Power Rangers (77371). 1.00 The Wiltons (62555). 2.00 Gordo (50178). 3.00 1995 Billboard Music Awards (88710). 5.00 Sky Talk. The Next Generation (7517). 6.00 The Simpsons (653). 6.30 Jeopardy! (6988). 7.00 LAPD (2245). 7.30 MASH (8772). 8.00 Central Park West (21463). 9.00 Police Rescue (58994). 10.00 Star Trek: The Next Generation (67831). 11.00 Live & Order (76940). 12.00 David Letterman (6537392). 12.45 The Untouchables (6921598). 1.30 The Edge (221818). 2.00-6.00am Hit Max Play (6136802).
- Sky Movies.** 7.00am Day of Living (1938) (54739). 8.00 Alca Azules (1935) (24130). 10.00 The Duxbury (1953) (6170255). 12.05 Summer Rental (1985) (70261). 2.00 Hostage to a Day (1993) (28371). 4.00 Son of the Pink Panther (1993) (6449). 6.00 Mrs Doubtfire (1993) (5807). 8.00 Shadowlands (1993) (2620811). 10.15 Brain Shaker's Dracula. See Choice (1992) (6638710). 12.25 Case to Eden (1992) (82814). 2.15 Live People (1992) (664014). 4.10-6.00am The Good Policeman (1993) (633173).
- Sky Movies Gold.** 4.00am A Hard Day's Night (1964) (1007401). 5.30 The Making of a Hard Day's Night (1994) (6994263). 6.50 Heidi (1985) (6504325). 8.30 Police Academy 2 (1985) (70913). 10.00 The Philadelphia Experiment (1984) (293532). 11.50 Jewel (1978) (8418889). 1.55-3.40am Evening Live Saly (1938) (119204).
- Sky Sports.** 7.00am World Sport Special (51212). 7.30 Racing News (22807). 8.00 Showboat Tour (21604). 8.30 Football Special (28701468). 10.15 Cricket (614333). 11.30 The Big Test. 2.00 News - Live. (446702). 3.00 Rugby World Cup (2265). 5.30 Football Special - Live (110604). 6.00 Football Special - Live (7796498). 10.15 Sports Centre (710449). 10.45 Cricket (2967772). 12.00 The Big League (593432). 2.50 Monday Night Football (34784). 3.30-4.00am Sports Centre (75734).

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news

Rare staging of championships with a 300-year tradition is made possible by big freeze. Andy Martin reports



The ice man cometh: A contestant in the Fen Championships at Easington, Cambridgeshire. The event only takes place if conditions for skating are perfect

Photographs: Peter Jay

Fenland skaters blow hot in the cold

According to thermodynamics, it is impossible to attain absolute zero (minus 273°C). Bury Fen, in Easington, Cambridgeshire, made a fair crack at turning thermodynamics on its head on Saturday. It certainly succeeded in turning a few skaters on their heads as the Fen Championships were fought out on a 400-metre track carved out of a 30-acre sheet of solid ice. Amid scenes straight out of a Brueghel, several hundred men, women and children skidded about on skates, sledges, prams, dustbin lids and, often enough, the seat of their pants.

I arrived prepared to do a Harry Houdini to escape from beneath the frozen flood waters of the River Ouse. The notice on the gate did not exactly reassure me: "Skating is dangerous and you skate at your own risk. DEEP WATER IN PLACES." But I need not have worried. The ice was so fathomless I would not have been surprised to spot a refrigerated hairy mammoth down there. There was no risk of falling through the ice.

Contestants in the Fen Championships had to come from within a 40-mile radius of March, near Peterborough. The word "heat" for the early rounds was never less appropriate.



Professional skating started on the Fens when farm labourers were laid off in the winter. They skated to eat

But the hottest skaters were Michael Edwards, from King's Lynn, 16-year-old winner of the one-and-a-half-mile Fen Cup in 4 minutes 34 seconds, and Jonathan Cave, 17, of Peterborough, who won the 500 metres sprint in 38.24 secs. Both are members of the Great

Britain short track squad. Skating is a great tradition on the Fens. Our only world champion, James Smart, came from nearby Welney. The locals credit the 17th-century Dutch engineer Cornelius Vermuyden with bringing skating over to England at the same time as he

drained the Fens. Now the serious skaters regularly travel to the Netherlands to train, buy their kit, and go through their paces at the Mecca of skating, the giant 400-metre indoor ice palace at Heerenveen.

Conversely, some Dutchmen come to live over here. Jan van Wonderen said Bury Fen reminded him of Holland in the winter where everyone puts their skates on and you can glide over 50 kilometres across country without ever having to take your skates off. There was only one vital thing missing: the *koek en zopie* (cake and drinks

stall). "In weather like this, you really need soup and hot chocolate and a fire going."

Phillip Doubleday at 66 was the oldest competitor and clocked a respectable 5 min 38 sec in the one-and-a-half-mile event. Born in January 1929, he was first carried on to the ice in March 1979 and could skate almost before he walked. As a professional skater he had fallen through the ice more times than he cared to remember. "We don't like it," he said, gritting his teeth, "but it happens." Fen farming stock are hardy souls. Professional skating started here when farm labourers, laid off for the winter, would skate for money to replace their wages. They skated to eat.

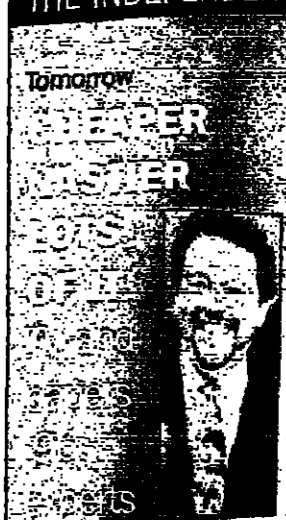
Now there is a new order threatening to overtake the old: in-line skaters or rollerbladers. The technique (sit low, drive on the outside edge) is broadly similar, but the ethos is hedonistic Californian rather than stoic East Anglian. Melton Morris, grandfather of Michael Edwards, originally built a in-line skating track at West Winch, near King's Lynn, to provide out-of-season training to ice skaters. "Now," he says, "in-liners have taken over."

But the rugged conditions on

Saturday favoured the born and bred ice warriors of the Fens. "This is the hard men - or the lunatics," Mr Morris said. Second in the one and a half miles was Michael McInerney, a rollerboy who had swapped his wheels for blades for the day. "This is not my peak season," he pointed out. "If this were July, I'd be flying."

The great thing about the Fen Championships is that they hardly ever happen. The event can only take place when conditions are perfect, if you can call a killer wind-chill factor and lumps of snow and hoarfrost lying about the course perfect. Fen skating reminded me of the Eddie Aikana Big Wave surfing contest, in Hawaii, which is only held when the waves get higher than 20 feet. "Yeah," said one woman spectator, "but I'd rather be in Hawaii."

THIS WEEK IN THE INDEPENDENT



Sports

Extra preview

Wed

EXPER TO

FAMOUS

27 year

with the mag

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HAVE YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES?



THINK () CHOIR
AMPLE () REVEL
GRAND () DROLL
PIVOT () VAGUE
SPACE () BLESS
EAGER () HOVEL
LOCAL () MANOR

Place a letter between the words which, when substituted for the middle letter of each word either side, will create two other words. When all the letters have been found a word can be read downwards. What is the word?

Get the answer right and we will send you a Certificate of Merit.

The answer is
If you can solve this puzzle you could be eligible to join Mensa the high IQ society.
Cut the coupon for further details and a copy of the self-admiration test.
Post to: Mensa, FREEPOST, Wolverhampton, WV2 1BR.

Name _____

Address _____

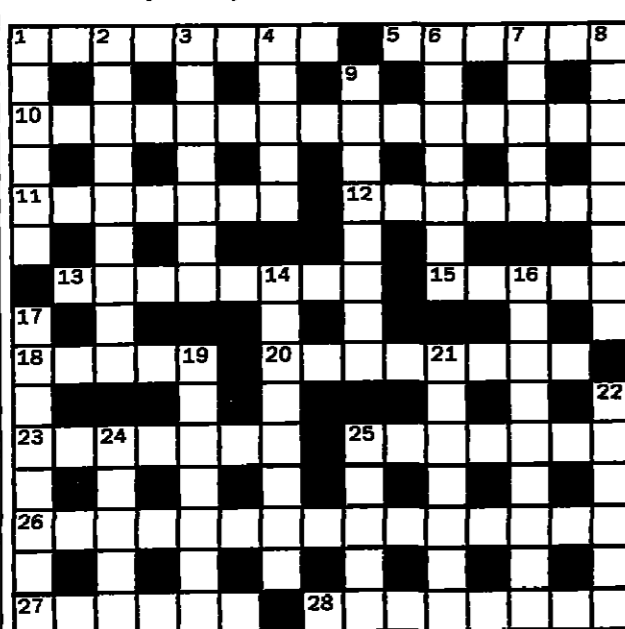
Post Code _____

Mensa

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 2871, Monday 1 January

By Portia



ACROSS
1 Bitter-sweet? (4,4)
5 Kid with sack delivers jumble (6)
10 That is place to go to build medical centre (7,8)
11 No good to be more frugal (7)
12 Unable to swallow hard one, I have it with wine (7)
13 Writing style certain to be very fine (8)
15 Rabble returned, surrounding Dutch royal house (5)
18 Sounds like rod is crooked (5)
20 Clip neat kind of garden flower (3-5)
23 Speech engineers drop out of course (7)
25 One included in a table setting out plant species (7)
26 Fairytale opera? (6,3,6)

27 Immediate cause (6)
28 Key left in a round shaped pot (8)

DOWN

1 Note of regret after bill's to fall due (6)
2 Unenlightened? (2,3,4)
3 Blunt director reaches impasse (4-3)
4 Unfolds topless vestments, lined with navy (5)
6 A positive aim for delegate (7)
7 Staff don't make a declaration (5)
8 Trail over getting every one involved in dance (8)
9 Study Greek island material (8)
14 Chinese duck moving in later (8)
16 Not scared by accident in Yorkshire (9)
17 Transport firm heading for trouble (8)
19 Heard proper well-informed review (5-2)
21 Ample sign European's coming into line (7)
22 Magician getting the bird (6)
24 Roman author occupied by new piece of poetry (5)
25 Girl is seen in costly diamonds (5)

Winter loosens grip as mild air filters north

REBECCA FOWLER

The cold snap that brought snow and ice and record low temperatures to parts of Britain began to lift at the weekend - and resulted in thousands of burst water pipes.

The London Weather Centre said the improvement was marked. "It's going to get dramatically milder, with milder air spreading from the south. The Siberian wind has gone back to Siberia," a spokesman said.

But conditions remained perilous for drivers last night, the RAC described South Wales as an "ice-rink", and freezing rain and sleet created treacherous conditions in the North.

There was growing concern last night for a missing couple, in their fifties, whose abandoned snow-covered car was found on Friday night at Wenlock Edge, Shropshire.

The bad weather has also taken its toll on the rest of Europe. Five people were killed and seven seriously injured in road accidents in Belgium and northern France this weekend. Italy was also affected. Snow forced the closure of Milan airport yesterday, while heavy

rain battered central and southern regions, and the canals in Venice overflowed.

Emergency services in Britain were stretched to the limit last night, as drivers struggled to their New Year's Eve destinations.

Ambulance controllers in Oxfordshire said every ambulance in the county was being used to dash from one accident to another, and in Avon, there were more than 500 emergency calls. PC John Troke, of Hampshire police, said: "As fast as the grit is put down, the road is icing over again. Cars are spinning or turning over like ballerinas skating around."

In Scotland, which has suffered the worst weather in the last week, the thaw has caused thousands of burst pipes, and emergency services were receiving calls at the rate of 300 an hour in Glasgow alone.

A man whose body was found wedged in a window at his home in South Wales may have frozen to death, police said yesterday. They believe the 52-year-old man became trapped while trying to get into the house in Ammanford after locking himself out.